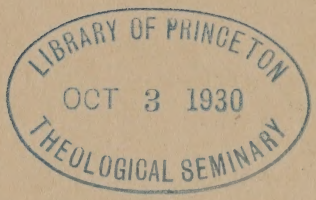
TEXTS THAT HAVE TOUCHED ME

W. S. BRUCE



BS 540 .B7 1929
Bruce, William Straton, 184
-1933.
Texts that have touched me

TEXTS THAT HAVE TOUCHED ME

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
OCT 3 1930
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

By W. S. BRUCE, D.D., F.R.S.E.

Author of

Old Testament Ethics; Social Morality; Croall Lectures 1894*; The Nor'East; Psychology of Christian Life and Behaviour; The Wisdom Literature; Salt and Sense; Reachings after Reality,*
&c.

NEW YORK CHICAGO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

Hunt, Barnard & Co., Ltd.,
Printers,
London and Aylesbury.

PREFACE

This Book is meant to be helpful to the Spiritual Life.

The thoughts suggested by the various Texts are pertinent to that aim, simple and practical. The Texts have touched me keenly, quickening both emotion and imagination. May they give similar help to my readers.

W. S. B.

Banff, 1929.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	God's Poems	7
II.	The Grace of Giving	8
III.	Evolutionary in Grace	10
IV.	City *v.* Country	12
V.	A Good Foundation	14
VI.	The Best Adorning	15
VII.	Secret of Success	17
VIII.	Has Heaven Favourites?	19
IX.	A New Commandment	21
X.	An Old Age and Full	22
XI.	Our True Dynamic	25
XII.	Judging and Rejudging	26
XIII.	Have We a Sufficiency?	28
XIV.	A Finished Life	30
XV.	The Best Meeting Place	32
XVI.	Acquaintance with God	33
XVII.	Joy of Completeness	35
XVIII.	Riches and Their Increase	37
XIX.	Singularity not Sinful	39
XX.	Salt and Seasoning	41
XXI.	Chastity and Fine Delicacy	43
XXII.	Established in the Faith	44
XXIII.	Girt Loins	46
XXIV.	Pure Wellsprings	48
XXV.	A Fruitful Life	50
XXVI.	Mammon Made a Friend	51
XXVII.	How to Gain Influence	53
XXVIII.	Love Likes to Gives	55

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIX.	Knowing and Doing	57
XXX.	The Rhythm of Life	59
XXXI.	Filled with Laughter	61
XXXII.	The "A Fortiori" Road	63
XXXIII.	Great Saintly Souls	65
XXXIV.	Knowing and Believing	67
XXXV.	No Fretting, No Fever	68
XXXVI.	Life's Supremacies	70
XXXVII.	The Marriage Bond	72
XXXVIII.	Excuses Many	75
XXXIX.	Only Partialists	76
XL.	Have Courage	77
XLI.	Possess Your Possessions	79
XLII.	Life's Transparency	81
XLIII.	Cumulative Grace	82
XLIV.	Heroic Exercise	84
XLV.	The Race and Its Finisher	86
XLVI.	The Present Moment	88
XLVII.	The Song of the Birds	89
XLVIII.	To Give or To Get! Which?	91
XLIX.	Stored Treasures	93
L.	Sons of God	95
LI.	No Deception	96
LII.	The Rent Veil	98
LIII.	A Full Reward	100
LIV.	The Majesty of Meekness	101
LV.	Not to Condemn	103
LVI.	Wholeness and Holiness	105
LVII.	True Independence	107
LVIII.	Building Tabernacles	109
LIX.	Right-Doing Its Own Reward	111
LX.	Our Firm Foundations	113

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
LXI.	The New and the Old	115
LXII.	Prayer and Patience	117
LXIII.	Be Friends with the Holy Spirit	118
LXIV.	A Courageous Reticence	120
LXV.	Gilt-Edged Investments	122
LXVI.	The Second Mile	123
LXVII.	Foresight and Insight	125
LXVIII.	Young Jabez's Fine Prayer	127

CHAPTER I

God's Poems

"*For ye are His workmanship, created of Christ*" (Eph. ii. 10).

The word which St. Paul uses is *poema*. Literally, "Ye are God's poems, written by His own hand. The work was God's and ye are in Ephesus to be God's poetry. The steps of your life are to be stanzas which all may read. Every line is to be glowing literature: so attractive that your neighbours shall be drawn to Christ."

Most suggestive to us to-day is this word "poem." Have we ever thought of it? Does it not seem such a lofty thing as to be unattainable? In my humble out-of-the-way life, in my poor and commonplace existence, how can I be a poem? My words are not poetic; my soul is not daily soaring to heights of poetry; my thoughts remain low down among the things of sense; and my duties every day drag me down to the shop and the farm, and the kitchen and the nursery. I can see no poetry in them. Can God really see it, I wonder? Or was St. Paul himself speaking in a poetic strain?

No! St. Paul uttered a plain and positive truth. A poet is a "maker"—and a poem is what a poet "makes." It is the outcome of a man's deepest thoughts and finest feelings; and into it he throws his whole mind and soul. Dunbar speaks of the Scottish poets of his time as "makkers of verse." They were creators of their poems.

Now a poem is a thing of beauty, and of joy. Homer composed his *Iliad*, and was said to have also

sung it: it gave joy to Greece for many a day. In reality it made a language, a religion, and a nation. With the Odyssey, it took possession of the world in the eighth and seventh centuries before Christ. The old man was born a bard, and was scarcely conscious of the delight he was giving to his fellow-men. But all the same his famous poems made the Greek language and the Greek people what they were.

Heaven wants to make us like itself. We are to be God's poems, to speak His praise, translate His mind to men, and so create the great and powerful Church of God.

Let us get a sight of our lives in this their true perspective. And Heaven save us from being discordant notes in its great harmony! Get every one of your talents keyed to the tune of its grand orchestra and let no function of your body or mind fail to fulfil its part.

I want my will to be one with God's will, and my heart to thrill with the thought of His love. Then I feel sure I shall be a poem of His creation, and give some real though faint expression to the world of the mind of my Maker.

CHAPTER II

THE GRACE OF GIVING

"*Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts xx. 35). WE get the words not from any of the Gospels, but from St. Paul. They were given him by some of the disciples of the Lord, and they are thoroughly

in keeping with the mind of the Master, who gave Himself for us.

Giving is a lovely virtue. Abraham crowned his life by saying, "Of all Thou hast given me have I given a tenth unto Thee." Every son of Abraham brought his tithe to his priest: that was his least. Many more gifts followed throughout the year. Let not the Jew put to shame the Christian. A tenth is our least: much more than that should be our most. The Jews' minimum should not be the Christian's maximum.

But circumstances must rule: and the poor widow's two mites, being all she had, may far exceed in love the millions of a millionaire. The words of Christ remain true to all, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." So many wish only to get. Their whole life is spent in drawing all the fish into their own net, and securing all the grist for their own mill.

But Love likes to give. Its highest pleasure is found in parting with its possessions. It gives its money to help the needy; it shares its wealth with the wayfarers who have fallen by the wayside. It gives its kind words in sympathy with the sufferers. It gives its prayers in intercession for all. It forgets not the foreign nations any more than the home people.

It says with St. Paul in this chapter, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold. My hands have ministered to my necessities." But He had never ceased night or day to labour for them in intercessions.

Let us be nobly generous in our prayers. If we

have the power, let us give the world our best thoughts in speech, or by the printed page.

"Give, give, be always giving,
Who gives not is not living."

Was there ever a finer epitaph than that placed on General Gordon's memorial stone which you see as you enter St. Paul's Cathedral: "He gave his strength to the weak, his sympathy to the suffering, his substance to the poor, and his heart to God." It is so compact of all the good virtues, and so true of the hero of Khartoum that all Britain mourned the loss of one who was the model of faith, of courage, and of conscientiousness. His diary, discovered after his death at Khartoum, is one of the most wonderful records to be found of modern heroism, of humility and unselfish beneficence.

CHAPTER III

EVOLUTIONARY IN GRACE

"*In the beginning God*" (Genesis i).

THE Bible makes no mistakes. Before all things it places God. He is the Antecedent to matter and to man: He is Creator and Sustainer of all. "Without Him was nothing made that was made." From Him come Life and Light, and all the lovely evolution of the world. Its glow by day, its fire by night are but reflections of His face, and show us His plan working out in a continual process.

We speak of Creation in seven days; but, of course, they were not days in the sense of being

twenty-four hours. They were eras or aeons; and not till the fourth era is the sun set in the heavens to give us the modern idea of day. During these aeons, each of millions of years probably, the Divine purpose was evolving. From the beginning God transcended Creation, and was above it and outside of it. Yet He was also its immanent force, the vital and moving power within it.

This is the true Evolution, a word often used to oust God from His world. But He is in it continually evolving His great plan of salvation and His purpose of grace. He is in it just as a current is in a river, as life flows through a plant, as light streams from the sun, and as water ever overflows from a fountain.

This evolving purpose of God is the explanation of what men call the Law of Progress. It is to be found in the story of the Church's growth since Pentecost. "In the *beginning God*," before the Church, within the Church, and developing His great plan of salvation through the Church to the end of time.

This is the Evolution of Grace. It is a gladdening doctrine. It is going on every day, and will go on. Let us get into the current of it, and learn to what ends it is working. It draws into its stream many other streams of influence, of which we are not always aware: and we foolishly oppose them.

Let us be thankful that the Involution is equal to the Evolution. The power of God's spirit is sufficient to develop the whole organisation of His purpose. Organisations in churches are sometimes mere machinery. But get the force of the

Spirit into them all, and then they will be vital and efficient. They will be used and be useful, and every worker in them will be an instrument of the most High.

CHAPTER IV

CITY *v.* COUNTRY

"*And Elisha said to her, Wouldest thou be spoken for to the King? But she said, I dwell among my own people*" (2 Kings iv. 13).

THIS good woman, called "a great woman," had done much for Elisha. Her house was his *hospitium* whenever he wanted to stay there. One room was to be the prophet's own room, with bed and candle and table and quiet for himself. He felt deeply in her debt.

What return could he make her? Might he not take her up to the Capital and introduce her to the King at next Reception Day? She would be sure to appreciate this honour.

But it was modestly declined. "No! I dwell among mine own people. I am content with my life of privacy at home." All things considered, a private life is to be preferred. If we are called of God to a public post, we shall ask grace to obey the call of duty. But we may not wisely or ambitiously seek it. The honour carries with it a heavy load of obligation. The highest tree gets most of the gale. He that stands in the loftiest Social position must be prepared for the severest criticism. The life among one's own people is

quiet and free. The other is servile, often slavish, always noisy.

The first is one in which they may not win popular regard; but if they do not win public smiles, at least they need not fear public frowns.

Jesus Christ lived for thirty years in the seclusion of Nazareth. Duty called Him to a public office. Yet how often did He retire to some quiet village by the Lake of Galilee and delight in the society of a few kindred disciples. He spoke in the streets of Jerusalem all day: but the shades of night saw Him crossing Olivet to the quiet beloved home at Bethany. Envy dogged Him in the city: love met Him in the country. He was terribly misunderstood in the one: He had loving sympathy in the other.

To our regret each returning census proves that our villages are sinking into hamlets and the population is drifting citywards. Yet in the city one may be very lonely: friends may be few, though lectures and picture houses are many. While in the simpler life of the farm and village, one may gain friends, health, liberty, and the most natural forms of happiness—all cheap and wholesome, and not artificial.

It is significant that the greatest minds have elected to live far away from noisome cities. Tennyson, Wordsworth, Meredith, Darwin did so. They found there a restfulness which favoured high thought and mental concentration. The revival of the village community is one of the most pressing needs of our time. Less money may be made; but a truly fortunate life may be lived. Happiness

lies not in the multiplication of our means, but in the limitation of our desires. "He lives most who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

That is what the Shunammite wanted who chose to live among her own people.

CHAPTER V

A GOOD FOUNDATION

"*Laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come*" (1 Timothy vi. 19).

A TEST question stands here. What are you storing? On what things do you place the highest value? Do you set store mostly on money? or on Manhood? or on Character? or on Pleasures? or on the Passing? or on the Permanent. Tell me which, and I can soon tell you what you are.

The essence of Christianity is the proclamation of a standard of *absolute values*. At every point these contradict the world's estimates of worth. The mere paraphernalia of life are valued lightly. The things seen are temporal; the unseen things, love, faith, hope and prayer, alone are eternal.

Lay up in store this solid currency. It gives a new scale of prices which demonetises the old. Its dearest things also are the cheapest, and most easily obtained. Spiritual goods are unlimited in amount, and we may all possess them. Further, they are only increased by being used. We rob nobody by taking them. These make the riches which St. Paul asks us to store.

They afford a good foundation for faith. But

here there must be no jerry-building. St. Paul on this point is clear. Not wood, nor stubble should be down below, but only what is solid. Virtue and spiritual reality are not quantitative, but qualitative in value. Only as the understructure is sound can the superstructure of character stand.

And we must build "against the time to come." Our structure must endure on to old age and to Death. It must be built of all Christian virtues, and cemented by Christian faith and love. Here lies our hope; and here our future wealth. Let us be rich in love; let us store up strength of courage and of liberality. All riches grow by the "overturn." They are meant to be used. And spiritual wealth is not diminished by its use. It is increased as it is employed to benefit our neighbour. For then:

"We grow rich by growing poor,
And from our largest givings
We draw our fullest store."

Let us see we are laying up treasure in Heaven, and building on a good foundation.

CHAPTER VI

THE BEST ADORNING

"*Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning . . . but let it be the hidden man of the heart*" (1 Peter iii. 3).

WITH Christ the outward counts for little; the inward counts for much. The first may beautify the person: the second beautifies the personality. The plaiting of the hair is not to be despised for

"a woman's glory is in her head." The wearing of gold and goodly apparel may have justification; but the head is more to be thought of than the hair; the clothing of the character with righteousness more than the clothing of the body with fine raiment.

Miss Charlotte Elliot expressed this in words which abide:

"I want that adorning divine
That only my God can bestow;
I want in those beautiful garments to shine,
That mark out Thy Household below."

There can be no ornament so beautiful as that of a meek and quiet spirit. No signet ring can compare with the Seal of Christ on the forehead of the Christian. Better far to be clothed with the comeliness of Humility than with "garments spotted by the flesh" or of Babylonish make.

If we possess the Indwelling Spirit we shall care little about the house we inhabit or the dress we wear. The one is of primary importance: the other of secondary consideration. The second is merely quantitative; the first is qualitative, and concerns the hidden man of the heart.

The one simply glorifies the body; the other gives glory and value to the soul.

Let us pray for the plenitude of the Spirit within, and think less about plenty in the world without. That will not prevent due attention to our office and our business; it will give uplift and reality to both. The Christian man will be dutiful, careful, attentive, conscientious just because he has learned fidelity to his conscience and justice to his fellow-

men. The exterior of life is wholly coloured by the interior. Beauty of face in a woman is very charming; but the beauty of Holiness is more charming still. The one may endure for life's brief span; the other will endure throughout all the long ages of Eternity.

May the comeliness of Christ be put upon us, and then we shall comply with Isaiah's counsel, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon thee." Lord, make all Thy children to shine.

CHAPTER VII

THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

"*The book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate on it day and night. Then shalt thou prosper and have good success*" (Joshua i. 8).

THE way to success has many windings. The end is not easily found: the door into it is difficult to discover. But Moses, that wonderful man of God, knew it. "Meditate on God's law; associate yourself with God's mind and God's working. It is the secret of Health; it is the source of Happiness: it is the road to Success."

To it there are no short cuts, although many think they have found them. They go to the Schools of Philosophy, search the books of wisdom, and hope Plato will tell them the secret. No! he frankly states he has not found it. They go to the newest Philosophy of Europe, but Eucken makes

no pretence to disclose it, and Bergsen admits his total ignorance.

Others go to the School of Science; but science is now too honest to give forth fables. She lives on facts, and success is not found in natural phenomena. The Book of Nature teaches much: it knows nothing about success.

Yet here is the secret in the Scriptures: Meditate—think—give your mind to the ways and works of God. If you would get more, think more. Auto-suggestion comes to your aid; Constructive Psychology is on the side of Moses. It can show you how reflection, moving the mind and kindling the affections and refilling the subconscious, may develop new powers of action, and open up new roads to success.

There is no doubt that fear ends in failure; cowardice creates diffidence and doubt, the sure ways to melancholia and mania and insanity. Beware! Think of God's power; meditate on His Almighty Strength. Learn what reserves are stored up in the Bank of Grace. Then go and lay the hand by faith upon them and appropriate them to your need. Draw daily cheques on the Bank of Divine Goodness. Heaven's wealth is all for our want. Why live in poverty when we may live in wealth?

Let us be millionaires in grace! Let us get on the right road to true Success! We *can* control our feelings: we can direct our mind: we can by meditation move our will. "What we can do, we ought to do." Then shall we prosper and have good success.

CHAPTER VIII

Has Heaven Favourites?

"*Jesus said, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given; he that is able to receive it let him receive it*" (Matthew xix. 11).

Jesus had been denouncing the too common sin of Divorce. It seemed to His disciples that this demanded a very high standard of conduct. Was it not a counsel of Perfection far above the level of possible living?

No! But there were some who could not receive it. They could not see the sin on all its different sides. It had relations to Society and Home and the State beyond their comprehension. Only they who had got from God the wide view, the comprehensive mind, and could give the right values to the many-sided truths connected with it, could receive it and understand it. Narrow minds greatly misunderstand. Half truths are whole lies. But they who can receive and grasp and comprehend the whole truth and estimate its values, let them receive it and profit by it.

This is a doctrine much larger than the question of Divorce. It includes all the highest truths of Revelation. Of the great Supremacies of the Faith it may be said, "He that is able to receive them, let him receive them."

God's Omniscience is one. It runs out into Foresight, Foreordination, Forgiveness, and Guidance. Every one of these is governed and shaped and substantiated by Omniscience. So with Divine Omnipotence. That attribute functions

in all matters of Faith. Can you not trust God in every one of your trials? Poor child! You are only in the Infant School of Grace. Climb up the stairs, and get a view of God's Omnipotence, and your mind will expand and become able to receive the assurance of Forgiveness, the gift of Guidance and the high doctrine of an overruling Providence that holds the Helm of all things, and guides History on to the goal of Goodness.

Among the great Supremacies of Revelation probably none has given more trouble than the Election of Grace. That doctrine stands in the forefront of Scripture, and if it be not a truth, the Word of God has plainly deceived us.

But it is given to those who can receive it and rightly conceive it. Many mock at this majestic doctrine. In all ages the scoffer has manifested a narrow mind. His disease is Myopia, and short-sightedness easily goes astray. Was not Israel for long the Election of Grace? Can any truth-loving man deny that Abram and his family and descendants were a chosen or a favoured people? Were not the Twelve Apostles elect or select ones? Is it not true that many are called but few are the choice ones? There are no favourites with Heaven. The chosen are selected for the work which is heaviest, the duties that need daring, the trials that test and demand endurance. Their selection is not to privilege but to service. The lazy hang back; the cowardly refuse. The consecrated give all and refuse nothing. They become supreme, because they have entered into Life's Supremacies, and hearkened to their call to highest duties and dangers.

They get the far views of the mountain top because they have climbed to the summit and seen the horizons. They have crossed the Rubicon and dared all for Christ. Many He called; but few are the choice ones.

CHAPTER IX

A New Commandment

"*A new commandment give I unto you that ye love one another, even as I have loved you*" (John xiii. 34).

It was new then: it is new still. To many it seems to be as yet unknown. Catholics hate Protestants; and the hatred is returned. When shall we learn to love and not to hate? To see the good in one another, and not search for the evil? to recognise our neighbour's virtues, and to be shamed by our own shortcomings.

How can I show my love? First of all by my Liberality. "Love likes to give." How true is that proverbial saying! Is my liberality the measure of my love? Then let me judge it aright and increase it. "The liberal heart deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall it stand."

Lord, deepen my love, and make it flow out in many gifts. Save me from mean selfishness. Open my heart; and make it to open my purse. Still around me stand the poor and the needy, the orphan and widow, the hungry and the unemployed. Save me from the greed of money, and the grasp of a selfish nature. Art not Thou the Giving God who givest to all men, and upbraidest not? Make me like Thee, Lord, a giver, giving out continually,

however limited my means may be, as the Sun gives out of himself by his beams.

And let my gifts be much more than of money: for sometimes it does so little good, and even may injure or hurt the feelings of the receiver. Teach me to give gifts of loving words and kind thoughts. Have I spoken the truth in love? Here is a test. Now this day let me do it, and tell my neighbour the lofty truths about Thee, and Thy goodness, and greatness, and do it in such loving terms and tones as to win him to Thee.

Love always woos and wins. It is the one thing that sweetens society and unites it into a Brotherhood. What else shall win the world to Christ? What else shall convert the Heathen to Christianity? Our Imperial rule has not done it. Our trade has actually kept them aloof, and our traffic in liquor has terribly injured them.

Let us win the world to Christ by love, by deeds of such honest kindness as shall convince them we love them for the Lord's sake. Love alone has real power; love is penetrating and persuasive. It wins in every contest: for it kills out the spirit of the contest, and instils in its stead the spirit of Brotherhood. This is what the world wants, and Christ came to give it. "Love one another; be pitiful: be courteous."

CHAPTER X

AN OLD AGE AND FULL

"*Abraham died in an old age, and full*" (Genesis xxv. 8, R.V.).

OLD age need not be empty. It is, of course, "full of years," but these words are not in the Old Testa-

ment, only added by the Authorised Version. Abraham's old age was full of deeds and thoughts and communings with God. He lived much longer than we do now. Yet he "died in an old age and full." Can we still do so? Some do not seem to want it. Even wise John Foster in his *Popular Ignorance* deprecates his approaching age. "How beautiful was youth, my friends. But now we are growing old." And he bids them buy up every moment before the threescore and ten arrive.

Dr. Johnson, great and good as he was, lived under this dread. He had spent his youth in poverty, and his manhood in a struggle with debt, and now as he had triumphed, hated old age comes on and "he has not time to utilise his victory."

Madame de Stael is wiser. "Few men," she says, "know how to grow old gracefully." "There is about them an unmanly sadness in quitting the old games and throwing off youth's follies." But to grow old is natural. Being natural, if rightly accepted and used, it is beautiful. Mr. Gladstone's old age was a very lovely one, spent in retirement, and yet full of plans for the improvement of the people. Mr. Wilberforce and Lord Tennyson had both a busy and a beautiful Old Age. Wordsworth sings of those who have

> "A happy youth, and their old age
> Is beautiful and free,"

and for his dearest friend he prays that

> "An old age serene and bright
> And lovely as a Lapland night
> Shall lead thee to thy grave."

The secret of old age is to keep young in feeling, and in freshness of spirit. It is well to receive new gifts of grace every day, to realise every morning our many mercies, and discover that love fills our cup and renders our life a real Romance.

Why should youth alone be romantic? I have found more romance since passing eighty than before twenty.

Tolstoy, ere he reached mid-age, was a pessimist of the deepest dye, and wealth and position brought him only cares and worry. He discovered Christ, and at the end of life and old age he became a child again. The Gospel brought fresh hope and outlook on life, and he became the happy optimist of Russia.

There are people who are quite old at 35, and others who are quite young at 75. Some even before their third decade, like Byron, are disillusioned. Others in their eighth decade praise God for blessings, get fresh experiences of His rich grace, and daily sit down at His banquet. They have not ceased to employ their minds. They work with their pen as Carlyle did at 82, as Eugene Stock did up to 93. For such, there was neither senility nor senescence. The elixir of life remained. The wrinkles come to the brow, but not to the heart. The aged eyes were lit with new fires.

The writer can truly testify that his memory of youth is happy, his memory of mid-age happier, but his memories of Old Age happiest of all. The Promised Land is not over the River: it is here. Canaan has come as it had to Abraham when he lived to an old age and full.

CHAPTER XI

Our True Dynamic

"*We also are weak, but we shall live with Him through the power of God*" (2 Cor. xiii. 4).

Again and again this word Power is used in the Epistles of St. Paul. He loves the thought, because he likes the thing it represents. His gospel is not in weakness but in power. He is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to them that believe it. The Greek word is *Dunamis*, from which we get "dynamic." The Corinthians were weak because they forgot to make use of this great dynamic of duty. Would they but claim and use this spiritual force, their church would soon be a powerful centre of Christian life.

The wheels of every manufactory stand still until in the morning the engineer couples them by his belt with the great driving wheel of the steam engine. The motor car cannot move till the petrol is kindled, and gives the impelling force.

No man is of influence apart from this Spiritual Dynamic. Influence is that which flows out and then flows in. It must flow out of the Divine Spirit, and flow into the believer: then flow out of him into others. He has force and influence just as he keeps in touch with the Spirit of power. Then the cleansing efficacy of the divine Spirit makes his conscience clean and his heart calm, and whispers to him, "It is thy duty, fear not, I am with thee. I will uphold thee with My right hand."

What a power there is in the sense of right! "He is doubly armed who hath his quarrel just."

I am not fully armed till I am clothed with the armour of God. So cleansed and so clothed why should I fear? What can harm me if the Spirit of righteousness is a friend?

Spirit of Power come down and dwell with us! Descend again upon Thy church as Thou didst at Pentecost. She is weak before the world: she retires when she should be advancing: she is silent when she should speak. Come Holy Spirit and make her progressive and aggressive. Be to her the Spirit of Power and of a sound mind. "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Let us know the strength that lies in the feeling that such a Standard-Bearer is by our side.

A small accession of friends appeared on the horizon at the Field of Bannockburn; the English saw it, and lost heart; and Bruce won the battle as Edward's line wavered, and he ordered the Scots to advance. Flodden had been Bannockburn had the Scottish King done the same thing and been as well supported. We know where our Dynamic lies. Let us daily put our hand upon the lever of Prayer, and get the Power to pour through us.

CHAPTER XII

JUDGING AND REJUDGING

"*Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again*" (Matt. vii. 1).

ALWAYS and everywhere this great law holds of measure for measure. It is part of the moral Law of

Balance. Do justly, and justice will surely come to yourself. Act unfairly, and the sin will return upon the sinner. Sisera was a cruel monster, and slew innocent blood. "The stars in their courses," sang Deborah, "fought against him." Every planet in its orbit helped to hurl him to his deserved doom.

Not otherwise is it still. If Britain do not rightly treat the Hindu, the hand of the Hindu will one day smite the British. We may fancy we can conceal the driving power of our selfish ends and pretend India's betterment. If it be true, the betterment will come back to ourselves. If only a pretence, the evil, like a boomerang, returns upon our own head.

This great law of moral recoil is but little understood. Many seem to disbelieve it, otherwise they would not violate it. They imagine they can criticise their neighbours and even vilify them, and so injure them. They may do so for a time, but finally the good man's name will stand out clear, and the vilifier will be vilified. He will get the measure he meted out.

King David sent the husband of Bathsheba on a hopeless errand, and so got him killed, and claimed his wife. The wicked deed drained the cup of David's home-happiness, and proved to be the great mistake of his life. The King ordered Jason to go in search of the Golden Fleece, hoping he might never return from Colchis. But despite serpents and fire-breathing bulls, return he did, and the pretender who would fain have dispossessed the young King of his crown was himself dis-

possessed. The moral recoil of the Divine law of Nemesis again was manifested.

How was Jesus Himself defamed! Every vile epithet was hurled at His head. The jealousies of the people were all exploited against Him by the Jews. And up to the time of His death, all foretold by Himself, they apparently succeeded. Then came the revealing Crisis of the Cross and the reaction and the recoil of the Law of Truth.

Proud Judaism went down. Christ and His religion took hold of the world. Truth stood its trial and won its victory. Evil stood its trial and went to its doom. It simply got the measure it had meted out.

CHAPTER XIII

HAVE WE A SUFFICIENCY?

"*Our sufficiency is of God*" (2 Cor. iii. 5).

THERE is that in God which meets every one of our needs. His fulness is sufficient for our emptiness. His life is equal to the supplanting of our death.

How often do we pray as if our pleading must be of the most urgent kind to get the sufficient answer! How often behind our prayers is concealed the thought that grace is limited in its supplies, and is exceeded by our demands! Could there be a larger mistake? In God is all sufficiency. By His command this whole world came into existence, and He never created the end without designing the

means. Part fits to part: the effect lies already in the cause. And all are joined into unity by the one Almighty Friend, pervading and sustaining the whole. Nothing is wanting: every necessity is met.

My soul! Thy needs are infinite. Thou needest light to guide, and wisdom to warn, and love to sweeten, and life to supplant the continuous oncoming of death. Seek them not in any other source than in God. Find in Him the Light that never leads astray. Claim the cleansing of His Holy Spirit to make thee fit for His fellowship, and a choice weapon in His hand. Let His will be thy will, and His way thy way, and all thine insufficiency and inaptitudes shall be met by the sufficiency of His grace.

His atonement is sufficient to cancel our guilt. His Love is wide enough to cover our many wants. His Riches of grace far exceed the poverty of our petitions. Often we think our prayers must be limited lest we ask too much.

No! "Far above all you can ask or think" He can do. Yea, "exceeding abundantly above all."

O my soul live not in poverty and distress, when Heaven's wealth is all there to meet thy want. Pray to be saved from the limitation of those mean and mundane horizons. The love of God has an amplitude which is far above thy measurements: it is broader than "all the measures of man's mind." It is high as heaven and long as Eternity, and no need of thine can exceed its sufficiency. Be still my soul—rest calmly in God's all-sufficiency.

CHAPTER XIV

A Finished Life

" And Jesus said, It is finished. And He bowed His head, and gave up the Ghost " (John xix. 30)

His work was done: His life was ended: His mission had reached its close. He bowed His head in agony, but His heart was glad. " My duty is done: my aim is accomplished: Glory to God: it is finished."

God grant we be able to say it at the end of our life! For an unfinished life is a most sad tragedy. Nothing rightly accomplished: all things ravelled and tangled and in confusion. No happy sense of completeness about it; a half-life where there should have been a whole: a partialism, a broken statue, like the Venus de Milo without an arm. A torso, a mere trunk, deprived of its limbs which nobody can love and few admire. Lord save us from such a fate: and help us to finish our course, and keep the faith.

How may we do it? Only by thorough resolution. All difficulties go down before a determined will. Emotions are excellent in themselves, but they must be used as mainsprings to action, else they have missed their purpose. Feeling must fulfil itself in doing. " Act, act in the living present." Not one moment too much have we for doing our duty. Every day should see its task finished.

" Something accomplished, something done,
Has earned a night's repose."

Said a farmer to me: "I plan out the day's work for every man and boy every morning. Every day has its darg, and before evening it is done."

It demands resolution and foresight and self-denial. A large element in it must be diligence. The Habit of Work should be acquired in youth, and be part of our moral outfit. We must learn to be misers of minutes, and to buy up every passing opportunity. In this way alone shall we come to a happy life-close, and say with Christ, "It is finished."

Nothing is more to be dreaded than the need of a death-bed repentance. To confess our sins and get forgiveness is a daily duty for every child of God. To live a life of faithfulness to duty and conscience is always possible. The grace of God is offered for daily needs. If it be used we shall not leave a residium of debts, social or moral, to burden our death-bed.

Whatever is sin and known to us, let us give it up. Whatever is unknown may also be confessed and forgiveness obtained. And so each day may end with a sense of forgiveness for all the past, and of Hope for all the future. For such Death has no dread. It is but the passing into a larger life, with higher work and more power to meet its calls. Let us end each day with prayer and confession and the claim for full pardon of all past sins of omission and commission. For us then Death shall have no terror—We too, shall be able to say, "It is finished."

CHAPTER XV

The Best Meeting Place

"*And because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*" (Amos iv. 12).

The words strike home. They refer to no future coming Judgment. They concern the immediate present. Every day and in every event we meet God and He meets us. Amos thought of the pestilence in the cities, and the mildew in the fields and the famine in the homes; and in these circumstances he says, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

But God is also a God of mercy and grace: and in our health and our homes and daily duties we should see His presence and prepare to meet Him.

The story is told of an old cottar woman on the estate of Balmoral, that one day Queen Victoria's carriage stopped, and her Majesty knocked in order to call. The old lady was gratified: curtsied and went on apologising so much about her room that the Queen begged her to stop and just tell her the story of her life. But all through the conversation came apologies, "If only I had known your Majesty was coming I would have had the room prepared." Be prepared daily for your Lord's visits. Meet Him consciously at every morning meal, in every forenoon's engagements, in every afternoon's calls and evening gathering. Prepare yourself to be used of Him and still more to be usable. Let nothing surprise you, but say as it comes suddenly,

"The Lord is here." You meet Him, and in the new event shall meet new help and find new discoveries of His grace. Therefore, be instant in prayer: be open to His Spirit's influence. Let it flow into your heart and flow out into your speech.

And if you feel you cannot rightly prepare to meet Him, then ask Him to give you the fitting preparation. He will teach you the manners of the Court of Heaven. He will clothe you with the best robes of His righteousness. You shall be fitly apparelled for meeting His saints. In nothing need you be behind the perfected ones in your scholarship. All true culture will come in prayer. Your mind shall expand: your heart shall enlarge: you shall reach the true measure of your manhood. In every event of life, in every emerging circumstance, my brother, prepare to meet thy God.

CHAPTER XVI

ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD

"*Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace. So shall good come unto thee*" (Job xxii. 21).

To know God is the acme of knowledge. He is the cause of all results, the Creator of all things, the original Source of our sublunary world. Philosophy has spent its powers in this pursuit, and yet its sages have not been satisfied. Science to-day is in search of this knowledge, yet confesses its inadequacy to grasp the vast system of linkages that make the Web of Life.

For the Universe is a Multiverse. It is a network of interrelations which only an Almighty Power can hold in hand. It is so easy to say, "All is electricity; it moves everything." But who makes the electric force? Who has created the ether? And who created the sun which is behind it all? Who keeps the whole system of things going hour by hour? Can we know Him?

"God on His throne
Is eldest of Poets
Unto His measure
Moveth the whole."

But acquaintance is more than knowledge, and it is this that Job urges on us. It signifies a knowledge that implies friendship. Frequency of approach; exchange of confidences are necessary to acquaintanceship. Not to every passing visitor does Deity reveal Himself. There is the Hiding of His countenance, the Secret of the Lord is only with them that fear Him. The revelations of His mind are made known to none but such as "acquaint themselves with Him, and are at peace."

The secret of the Lord cannot be told. Words are poor to express it. They seem cold and chilling. But live in the Spirit—walk in the Spirit—abide in the Spirit. Get this as an experience of every day, and you shall be acquainted with God, and be at peace with Him.

There are beauties of the Divine which are even now revealed to us. We need not wait for death to disclose them. It is not a new scene, but rather a

new sense we want. Get our eyes opened wide to discover the Lord, nigh at hand. God is around us in this place, at this very hour. Only touch the hem of His garment; only feel the power of His actual presence, and new joy will fill you; new light will come on the plans of Providence.

Think of those words, "Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold a ram caught in a thicket," and the life of his darling boy was saved. Look round, and see the meaning of God's treatment of us. Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace.

CHAPTER XVII

THE JOY OF COMPLETENESS

"*That ye may stand complete in all the will of God*" (Col. iv. 12).

EVERY one longs for the coming of Completeness. We want above all things to do the will of God. Where is that will to be discovered? How can we measure our lives with it, and so get meetness for the Master's use?

Many are the marks of our Incompleteness. We have come short of perfect obedience. We have not yet reached up to the apprehension of perfect truth. The struggle for perfection has left us far behind in moral aptitude. In those three directions we have erred and strayed.

Here is the Intellect crying out with Pilate, What is Truth? And where can we find it? Nature gives no answer except this: "Increase of

knowledge is increase of sorrow," and "much study is a weariness of the flesh." But Christ replies, "Learn of Me—Come unto Me, and ye shall find rest," while the world can only say, "Learn of me and ye shall find restlessness," and there can be no perfection there.

Next comes the Conscience, eagerly asking, Who will show us the perfect good, the *summum Bonum*? And again the cold world answers, "There is none good, no, not me." I find good and evil everywhere. We must go to Christ to hear of the Perfect One. "None good, but God only. I and the Father are one."

Last of all comes the Heart—most pathetic in its cry—"Where is He whom my soul loveth?" It must find One whose love is perfection and whose life is Completeness. "I cried unto Thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion."

Here is the road to Completeness. Make God your portion and your wealth is complete. Make Christ your Righteousness and your robe is complete. Make the Spirit your constant Guide and your work will be complete. The triune God is with you and beside you for this very purpose. "He is a very present help in time of trouble." Not a remote and inaccessible Deity, living in the outer rim of the universe—but a God within call and nigh at hand to help in perplexities and within touch every time we need Him.

"Speak to Him for He heareth
And Spirit with Spirit can meet;
Closer is He than breathing,
Nearer than hands or feet."

Says George MacDonald, " A sense of the need of help is so present to every simple mind that, of all messages, the offer of help is easiest of reception."

Where am I incomplete? There, and at that very point Grace waits to enable me to do God's will. I will stand complete in the doing of it.

" I sink in life's alarms,
When by myself I stand,
Imprison me within Thine Arms
And strong shall be my hand."

CHAPTER XVIII

RICHES AND THEIR INCREASE

" *If riches increase, set not thine heart upon them* " (Ps. lxii. 10).

FOR nothing breeds a false self-confidence so easily as riches. Money gives the maximum of hindrance to piety, and the minimum of help. The words of Jesus have a solemn warning, " How hardly shall they that have riches enter the Kingdom of God."

The wise Bacon utters a similar note, " I cannot call riches better than the Baggage of Virtue." He was thinking of *impedimenta*, the military word: for baggage is a terrible impediment to an army on the march.

But with his all-round view of things, he adds, " Of great riches there is no recluse except it be in

distribution." And he quotes Solomon's words, "Where much is, there is many to consume it."

The one pleasure of wealth is the power it offers to give. It makes it possible to extend help to every good cause. Missions to the heathen world languish for want of it. Missions at home are handicapped in their need of help. The poor can be fed: the wretched can be nourished, and the naked may be clad. How delightful it is to carry help to all these, and to carry sympathy with the assistance offered. If one may long for riches, it is to enable one to be rich in good deeds done to the poor and needy. But we must beware of setting our heart on the money itself. That is to mistake the means of living for the end of life. God save us from the mistake of the miserly soul: and God help us to live thriftily and save money for the purpose of forwarding every good cause.

We must get our gains justly: we must act soberly and righteously in the process. We should then distribute cheerfully, for "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." We need not express any contempt for riches; far less criticise and condemn those who are rich through inheritance from others. They have their place in society and we have ours. But parsimony is peculiarly un-Christ-like; and thrift, the fine virtue, must never run into the extreme of its ugly vice, meanness.

Far best is it for a man to work for what he earns, and to make money by honest methods, and by living well within his income. And well is it to remember that "Riches have wings and quickly flee away," however safe may appear to be our

investments. "Therefore," as one said to me, "I clipped their wings and sent the feathers to the County Hospital where they made soft beds and pillows for the patients." The text was cleverly turned against itself, and benefited the hospital of which I was Chaplain. The metaphor is good; the moral is better. Heaven help us all to put it into practice. "If riches increase, set not thine heart upon them."

CHAPTER XIX

SINGULARITY NOT SINFUL

"*But so did not I because of the fear of God*" (Nehemiah v. 15).

THE brave cupbearer to the King dared to stand alone. He was not afraid of "the sin of singularity." Society does not like it; severely criticises it: and cannot believe there is conscientiousness in it. Yet the men of power have all been singular. They chose their God-given course, and carved their own way to fortune. Dr. Johnson confessed he had to ignore his critics and channel his own path. His strong individuality could do nothing less. Henry Ward Beecher justified his style of preaching by Nehemiah's example. John Wesley, in opposition to friends, said "I know I am not what I ought to be, nor what I hope to be, but by the Grace of God, I am what I am." Most of us

prefer to follow precedents. How have others done? What is customary? Shall I not be thought to be singular?

Yes! but that is not a sin. Only be sure you have conscience on your side. Do not seek for singularity. There may be vanity in that feeling. But when God's cause calls for it, be as brave as Nehemiah. For there are social usages, against which brave men must protest. Are you a friend of Temperance? Dare in its interests to abstain. Of Purity? Dare to condemn military methods that favour vice among soldiers. In many fashions which are foolish be a nonconformist. There are clever tricks in trade which a Christian man must abjure. There are official, established and all but stereotyped methods of doing business which men of high character will shun.

It is not easy to a young man to violate the vogue. But if his judgment condemns it, the violation will make his manhood. Too many like red-tape and stand *super vias antiquas*, and boast of it. It all depends on whether the ancient was fit for the changed times. There is not necessarily any virtue in novelty, or superiority in antiquity.

The true virtue of independence is in the courage which conscientiously does God's bidding. If He calls, dare to be original. The strong man is not capricious, though he will be called so. His path is his own, like that of Luther at Worms, "I cannot do otherwise: so help me God." These words defied the Emperor, and brought about the Reformation.

CHAPTER XX

Salt and Seasoning

"*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt*" (Col. iv. 6).

The loss in our food of salt is a loss of seasoning. When my African boy on the Nile wished a treat, I did not give him sugar—the cane grows in his own garden—but a little salt, which he kept in his hand, and licked it slowly to the last particle. If food unsalted is tasteless, so is speech. What is its best seasoning? Good sense to begin with; without which it is silly and tiresome. Knowledge, too, which makes all conversation informative. How we dread meeting the man of only one idea, who can talk only of his one subject, like the same tune played over and over again on a barrel organ. To him the subject is of paramount interest, and however you may begin the conversation, he gets it somehow dragged in. In his talk there is no salt, and no seasoning.

Perhaps nothing seasons conversation so much as humour. It is not wit which coruscates like a flash of lightning: but the kindly spirit that plays with a subject and gets fun out of every side of it. Shakespeare's talks in his plays are full of it. Some of his characters talk so humorously that "their words take all ears captive." It is a great gift from God, and happy is the man who has it. The late Mr. Spurgeon's sermons were illumined by this playful spirit which threw a charm round his high toned addresses. A half-hour's talk with him at

Mentone I shall never forget. The speech was with grace, but ever there was the gleam of humour to give it seasoning.

That fine old Greek, Socrates, possessed it. Poor he was, but thoroughly contented, and on being shown over a large emporium of expensive goods, simply smiled and said, " How many things you have that I do not want ! "

If Humour brightens, Grace edifies. Speech with grace is the outcome of a gracious spirit. It must necessarily also give a gracious manner. The same thing can be said by two people : in the one it is offensive by its manner ; in the other it is graciously pleasant and persuasive.

If love be the ruling motive, graciousness will be the sure outcome. Love is the best seasoning and the most persuasive pleader in all conversation.

Emerson says, " The benefits of good society are immense : the one romance is the encounter with superior persons on terms allowing the happiest intercourse. If we recall the rare hours when we met the best persons we then found ourselves ; and for the first time society seemed to exist."

Such society was seasoned with salt. Emerson's Essays are very enjoyable, for they have the seasoning of wide knowledge, of much originality and of American humour. The latter differs from ours much as the American mind differs. It is rather more caustic, very quick in its utterance and with that peculiarity which we call American and is otherwise indefinable.

CHAPTER XXI

Chastity and Fine Delicacy

"*But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground*" (John viii. 6).

I note in the chapter the chivalry of Christ. How very tenderly did He touch the shady side of human life! What chasteness lay in His mind! What charity characterised His judgments! His sympathies went out to all that was sweet and delicate in domestic life. When these Pharisees, tempting Him to say something they might lay hold of, brought the poor sinning woman before Him, He was shamefaced at their public exposure of her sin. Stooping down He wrote with His finger on the ground, and left each man's conscience to make its own accusations.

We cannot better improve our Christian character than by cultivating at all times the Spirit of charity. Purity and kindness, in speech and in thought, bring us very near to Jesus Christ. How often in Society do we meet with those who taint their talk with sinister suggestions. Be it our constant aim to lift the conversation to higher levels and to maintain it on these loftier planes!

We meet with others whose outlook is wide and whose speech has the tones of the Master in it. It gives us the benefit of broad horizons and the uplift of mountain air. But anon we find others whose talk is of little nothings, of mere pleasurings and gaddings about and gossip. Sometimes also with badinage and lubricity and ribaldry, or very clever ways of making gain.

As Christian men we must breathe a better spirit into social talk, and aim at creating a purer atmosphere. A drawing-room, full of ladies, suddenly was entered by Miss Frances Ridley Havergal. Instantly gossip ceased: a loftier note came into the conversation. God used that lady and winged her simple words so that they reached every heart; and all came away as if they had been for an hour on the Mount of Transfiguration. There was nothing the least forced in her conversation. But unconsciously it had uplift in it, and everything was viewed from the highest standpoint. When that is so, the air is rarified and the tone of speech becomes healthful and pure.

Christ's conduct in presence of the fallen sister and the Pharisees gives us a fine lesson. His charity is great. His chastity is ever most noticeable. We cannot be too like Him. As of old, all roads led to Rome, so all currents of thought should lead us to Christ and make us resemble our Master.

CHAPTER XXII

ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH

"*Established in the faith and abounding therein with thanksgiving*" (Colossians ii. 7).

NOT every one is established in the faith. They do have a standing in grace. But standing is not establishment. It has its feet on the rock, but they are not firm. It is based on truth; but the truth is

not clearly apprehended and gripped. We must both hold the truth and hold by the truth if we are to be stablished in the faith. How safe is the man who is so established! No storms can disturb: no enemies vex: no critics of the cross shake his faith. They pass him by as does "the idle wind which he esteems not." "I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless," says the hymn. And the man that does not fear is the man that best can fight the good fight of faith. He fights in faith, and he fights for more faith. Faith grows as I fight for it and fight in it. I am apprehended of God as I apprehend Him. And His hold of me is firmer than my hold of Him.

Being so stablished, let me be very thankful. Thanks is the expression of my gratitude. And to give expression helps the impression. This is a great psychological truth.

Psychology comes to the help of religion. Its primary law stands. "No impression without correlative expression: no reception without reaction." I must receive Christ in order to reproduce Christ in my life. The deeper He impresses me, the more fully must I express Him in conduct and character. The more I feel His love, the more expression must I give to it. If my feelings do not flow out, it will prevent His grace from flowing in. The impression will correspond to the expression. The more of gratitude shown, the more of grace received. Action and reaction are closely and intimately conjoined.

When I look at my life and count up my blessings, how many they are! Why am I so

favoured? Why am I born into a land of such knowledge and light and forward civilisation. Why was I not born a Negro or Zulu or a Mohammedan?

It is all of grace and not of merit. Lord Jesus, to Thee I owe it. Fill me with gratitude. Help me to abound in thanksgiving.

CHAPTER XXIII

GIRT LOINS

"*Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope up to the end*" (1 Peter i. 13).

A COUNSEL to continuance this. "Be resolute. Your race has to be run and the goal has to be reached. Wherefore, as the runners in the East do, gird up your robes, buckle to your work. Bring all your powers over to your side in your work for God." How much does the Mind control the Body? Think high thoughts and it elevates every part of your personality. Be half-hearted, and the very body gets tired and hinders work. Gird up the faculties of the mind: set before them the high end of your duty and at once every power of body and will and emotion unites to bring about the accomplishment of the task.

Otherwise we shall find that there is a division within the Self; Sentiments and impulses rebel; instincts fight against insight. The synthesis is not complete. There is no centre to the life. And

personal energy becomes impossible. We must learn to gird our loins, to redeem our powers and so to beget new moral energy for God's work. We must be master of our body, and get control of all our faculties. Let us not be weaklings in our will. Find out the roots of the mental elements causing trouble. Do not repress right emotions. Give them all expression in noble action. Be angry, and yet sin not. Learn to use every instinct aright by sublimating it. Bring your wrath over to the side of righteousness. Bring your jealousy over to God, and be very jealous of His glory. Give Him the gifts of your gentleness, your patience, your truth-speaking and your fortitude. He needs them all. Think courageously and then act courageously. Think soberly and act soberly. See all sides of a question and get a well-balanced mind. Examine your desires, and let only the best motives govern your conduct.

Above all, hope in God. "Be not cast down, O my soul." Away with moods and depressions and fears. Be no poltroon, but face facts and in God's strength conquer. "Hope thou in God: thou shalt yet praise Him." Every hero from David's time downwards has been a man of hope. St. Peter is often called the Apostle of Hope, and in his two Epistles it is again and again emphasised, as in our text.

On to the end be hopeful. And when the end draws near and old age comes, and dear ones drop away by death, let hope's lamp only burn the brighter. Look onward and upward, with a face radiant and golden. Heaven comes nearer. Christ

becomes dearer, service becomes sweeter, prayer merges into Communion and speaks more of Hope than ever.

It will be your companion up to Heaven's Gate, when it shall no more be needed. For then Faith shall merge into sight and Hope be changed to full fruition.

CHAPTER XXIV

PURE WELLSPRINGS

"*Understanding is a wellspring of life to him that hath it*" (PROV. xvi. 22).

WHAT a wealth there is in a wellspring. Climbing a mountain one day, I hit on a bubbling pool of water, amid a mass of green foliage and yellow primroses. What is this? Of course, it was a spring of fresh water bursting out of the mountain's side, pure and perennial. And down it trickled, making one continuous track to the foot of the hill, traceable to my eye by its green ferns and bog willows all the way. What a wealth of greenery is there in a wellspring!

Such riches, too, lie in wise understanding of the ways of God. The wise man is the wealthy man. He knows God and lays claim to all that God is and has. He possesses God's grace, and that makes him gracious: He inherits God's gifts and they make him inherently rich. His heart is a

"Wellspring of Joy" which is ever flowing and overflowing. In Him are fountains of happy feeling; and they flow all day in streams of solid pleasure. They do not get dry in summer nor "drumly" in winter.

Miss Anna Waring beautifully sings of it. She thanks God that her heart is at "the secret source of every precious thing," that its frail vessel has been so filled, and adds:

"I thirst for springs of heavenly life
And here all day they rise;
I seek the treasure of Thy love
And close at hand it lies.
And a new song is in my mouth,
To much loved music set,
Glory to Thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

Here is a new wellspring of knowledge that very few ever open. The untasted gifts that are to come: the undiscovered fountains that shall meet us on the future road to Heaven. Glory be to God for them!

Let us not fail to find every one of these fountains of gladness. Our experience of past mercies should lead us to expect more in the future. We are not half awake to our unnumbered blessings. They have "abounded" far beyond our merits. And through the grace and goodness of God they *will* abound. Heaven save me from being a discontented growler, the most unchristian being on earth. And Heaven grant me the understanding which is a wellspring of life.

CHAPTER XXV

A Fruitful Life

"*Fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God*" (Colossians i. 10).

Here is the right road to a successful life. On every bough of the tree fruit hangs. In every line of effort success comes. Wealth brings better wealth. Want does not hinder but yields its own blessing. Health helps and sickness gives aid. All round is fruitage. How is this wonderful success attained?

It goes along with and depends on increase in the knowledge of God. Our wealth is yielded to Him and so it opens up to us wonderful knowledge of the ways in which He uses it and the objects that He furthers. We get joyous insight into God's new departures when we join our wealth to His Work.

We bring Him our poverty and ask Him to use it too. And lo! we discover how He, the Son of God, who had not a penny till He got it from the fish's mouth, nor a pillow for His head was the richest Soul on earth, and we grow rich in faith and love and in likeness to Him.

We never increase in knowledge till we increase in devotion. We miss life's meaning till we dedicate our life to Christ's cause. The Book of Nature becomes an open volume full of teaching. Every bush is aflame with God. Now we find God in us and around us, and above us. The stars tell of His might. The perfume of the rose

reveals His sweetness. The beauty of the flowers manifests His loveliness. Tarshish and the isles bring their presents. Sheba and Seba offer their gifts. Arabia sends spices, and Ophir offers gold. All fruitfulness is allied to a strong faith. This is the best way to get constant inspiration to service. There is no limit to the soul that is ever trusting. No decrease in prayer to the soul increasing in love. No wandering away from Christ when He electrifies us with His love.

We require to call in no aid from priesthoods or philosophies, nor to go a-begging the world for happiness and pleasure. Know God better every day. Commune constantly with Him. Increasing in such knowledge in the sure way to a very fruitful life.

CHAPTER XXVI

MAMMON MADE A FRIEND

"*But I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends by means of the Mammon of unrighteousness*" (Luke xvi. 9).

HAPPY thought! The Master tells us we can make friends by means of mammon. We had thought the use of such means was a defilement, and that we ought to despise the wealth of the world. Nay! it is the world's wealth that is wanted in Christ's cause. It will then be no more desecrated, but consecrated. We shall find use for it without any

abuse of it. Christ wants men of wealth who have much to give. He needs men of mental worth to think and write and move the minds of the world. He needs men of moral power to influence the markets and cleanse the exchanges. And He needs men of money to send out the Bibles and the Missionaries to the poor heathen abroad, and to help to upraise the poor heathen at home. To all such, He calls, " Come ye wealthy, help the needy : Come ye great, make friends of the little. Come ye lairds, make brethren of the laymen : Come ye strong, give a lift to the weak. Bring your gems of the mine and pearls of the ocean. Bring your spices and odours and myrrh and gold to the manger at Bethlehem. The Christ of God has need of them all."

Let Tarshish bring her presents, and the isles offer their ornaments, and Sheba her gifts, and lay them all on the altar. None is without its use. " Too much to Him they cannot give : too much for Him they cannot do."

O Christ of Bethlehem, Thy dwelling place is among the poor. The hearts of the humble Thou doest delight to inhabit. But Thou despisest none ; and many humble hearts are among the sons and daughters of wealth. Even in the wealthy home of Bethany Thou wast welcome, and with its cultured society Thou didst delight to have fellowship. Thou didst enter every home, and didst call those of every class and sanctified by Thy presence the Scribe's sumptuous table until they accused Thee of being a winebibber and friend of the rich.

It was the rich heart Thou didst love. It was

the right use of wealth Thou didst enjoin. Money may be a medium of exchange between the high and the low, the richest and poorest. Teach us, Lord, to get the gain out of our gold, and the true value out of our silver. Let abundance of money bring you an abounding vitality—more wealth of influence, and more power of service.

If the Master discovered a use in Mammon, we should not pretend to be wiser than He was. Our first duty is to get it by right means, and our second is to dispense it by right methods. We shall show our wisdom by the way in which we make our wealth and distribute it. Integrity there must be in the former, and charity in the latter. Honesty will go with Liberality; thrift will join itself to kindness when we have made friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness.

CHAPTER XXVII

How to Gain Influence

"*He that overcometh, to him will I give authority over the nations . . . and I will give him the Morning Star*" (Rev. ii. 26).

How widely different are these gifts! They are to be the rewards of a righteous life. Have they some internal link of connection? Yes! And the link is one of likeness. The Authority over the nations springs from power to give Light. The

mind that can illumine other minds very quickly dominates them. It points out the best paths of progress. It shows where talents may be best employed. It opens up new roads to victory.

And does not the Morning Star come with the Morning Light? It drives away the darkness: it introduces the day. It is the token of illumination: it brings authority in its train.

O God! be to us the star of our morning: give us back the light of the days of youth. Brighten our eyes with hope; fill our senses with the thrill of happy and pure enjoyment. Govern us with Thy light: draw us by Thy morning splendour.

In Thee we can regain our youth. Our age may be rekindled with its morning glow. O Christ, bathe us in the fountains of Thy love, ever flowing and ever full. Give a quick beat to the pulses of our spirit. Make us children again without the weaknesses of childishness. Let the dayspring from on high rise upon our soul. Then shall our world be new, and our life made altogether luminous as on that day when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. We shall live in the joyous light of an endless morning.

What is true for us is equally true for our Nation. If Britain is to be a powerful Empire, she must discover the true source of authority over other races. The Yellow Peril will always remain until China and Japan come to believe in our Empire's thorough unselfishness. For our Empire must have a conscience and must convince the

yellow man that she seeks his highest good, and that his good is also her good. Gain that good will and we have gained authority over the nations. We shall have showed them that the evening star of the occident is one with the morning star of the orient. We shall be among those that overcome.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LOVE LIKES TO GIVE

"*Heal the sick: cleanse the lepers. Freely ye have received: freely give*" (Matt. x. 8).

HEALING the sick: cleansing the lepers: here is the commission to the first disciples. But they paid nothing for the power, and they must charge nothing for its exercise. What they freely received they should freely give.

What is it we have not received? The Home that shelters, the Land of our Freedom, the Gospel of grace, all are gifts. Shall we not then tell to all the great Hope which gladdens us, the Redemption which bought us, the Love which so enriches our lives? How dare we keep the donation to ourselves? This endowment has enriched our land, must we not share the largesse of love? Must we not make the poor heathen partakers of the boon? Nothing less than the free conveyance of the Gospel to the whole world can clear our conscience and

discharge our debt. Heaven save us from keeping to ourselves the good news of the Gospel of free grace.

Of all vices greed is the ugliest. The face of the man with the muck-rake in Bunyan's immortal work has haunted me ever since boyhood. The features are those of a fiend. The very rake seems devilish: and still more so the hands that grip it.

How hideous is selfishness and how unlike to the unselfish Jesus! If any one thing more than another should be the subject of our daily petitions, it is to be liberated from the love of self: to find a joy in giving, to be no more held captive by the steely chain of selfishness. It was when Job prayed for his friends that the Lord turned his captivity. Let us bear the burdens of others, and our own burden shall be lessened. So soon as we carry Christ's yoke it ceases to gall the shoulders and becomes very light. Our Cross can be transfigured. The moment we begin to pray for others and share their load, the fetters fall off, and the very burdens help to bear us.

"Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free
Help me to render up my sword
And I shall conqueror be."

I want no fee in the life of faith, but ever to be receiving and ever giving: never to think how little may I give but how much may be my subscription, and how sincere my contribution. "Freely ye have received: freely give."

CHAPTER XXIX

Knowing and Doing

"*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*" (John xiii. 17).

There is great happiness in knowing Christ. He is the Representative of God to our Humanity. He has made known to us the unknown. He has unveiled to us the secret hid from ages. He assured us that God is love and not wrath, justice and not revenge. Happy is the people that know the Lord.

But we can never rightly know Him till we do His will. Only then do we know the Lord when we love Him, and delight in His fellowship, and let no sin come between us to mar our communion. As we walk in His ways we learn His wisdom. Duty then becomes delight. The more we abide by His counsel, we discover a deeper joy in His service. Further, it is only when we keep His commandments that we really discover the meaning of His doctrine. The Doctrine and the Doctor are one, and cannot be separated. Dive deep into Plato's Philosophy if you would catch the mind of Plato. Live in the Gospels to know the Gospel. Live out Christianity to understand Christianity. Translate it into life and conduct and so be transformed into His image.

Seek to know the delight of duty and go on to know the further duty of delight. Christ is no hard Taskmaster. His service is freedom. His

will is one with our highest welfare. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

We are not to do His will in order to earn His grace. Doing would then be a "deadly thing": it would entirely overturn the right relations of sinner and Saviour. Service is second, not first. It is not given to win salvation, but as the sure and gladsome outcome of a sacred soul. We must not work for Salvation, but from Salvation: not for God's favour as if we were fit to win it, but from His favour fully bestowed upon us. We cannot work for Him too much; only let it be the outcome of filial love and of joyous fellowship.

Pray God we may be saved from being mere talkers of religion. "The talk of the lips tendeth only to penury." We should give our testimony courageously for truth: but the testimony that ends in talk is worthless. The life of honest service; the life that seeks to help the poor, to lift the lowly, to share the burden with the brother, to enter into deep sympathy with the sorrowing, is a life that glorifies God and does good to man. Our knowledge of saving truth should go out in saving acts. Our prayers for grace should make us very gracious in life. Our study of the Word should go along with its translation into acts of piety and deeds of liberality. We never rightly know Christ's doctrines until we translate them into common duties. Then they get new meaning, and shine with reflected splendour. "If ye know them, happy are ye if ye do them."

CHAPTER XXX

The Rhythm of Life

"*Therefore leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us press on to perfection*" (Hebrews vi. 1).

The writer of this Epistle has a fine conception of the duty of progress. Get based on first principles, he says, but proceed beyond them. Climb up the ladder of the Christian life. Its basis is on earth, but its top touches heaven. Get upward; go forward; never stand still. Be your motto, "Onward, upward, heavenward."

There is a very striking chapter in Spencer's *First Principles*. I read it again and again. It speaks of all motion as being curvilinear. The train running rapidly on the rails is ever moving in curves. The river rushes on, but the weeds at its bottom show how the water runs in curves. The flag on its staff waves in the wind, in continual curves. "Gentle undulations travel from its fixed to its free end." Trees shiver in the blast and every branch oscillates in the wind. The water runs over the stones in ripples; the stream meanders down the valley. The rivulet bends from side to side in its progress. The very music of the violin string is a series of vibrations. Light itself consists of undulations. The daily ebb and flow of the tides, their fortnightly increase and decrease, are due to the alternations of Solar and Lunar attractions, all go to show the rhythm of motion. The ether used by the wireless operator moves also on waves: and the electric current makes use of

them. Everywhere there is rhythm in motion; action and reaction forward and backward.

The Christian life suffers many an opposition: but often driven backward, its way is forward. St. Paul speaks of the "forwardness of the faith" of his Corinthian brethren. It is the watchword of the Church. "Onward, Christian Soldiers, marching as to war." Yet activity without meditation is weak. Progress not well grounded on first principles will be in danger of landing us in very injurious reactions. Work must be balanced by prayer; and days of hurry by times of quiet. In the midst of His most crowded work Jesus retired to the mountain to be alone in prayer. There was rhythm in his life. Let us attend to this rhythmic progress, and take care that our work be strengthened by prayer.

Hurry is not a help in grace. The Church of God to-day is over-organised. Her machinery has been increased so much that we continually hear the whirr of the wheels. But her real strength is in prayer and consecration. One thoroughly sanctified and holy life may count for more than many "workers." Character must come first; service is secondary. Let us be of those that are often in the closet, who have power with God in intercession, and who prevail therefore with men. Let us practise the pause, and have our ears open to all that God would speak. Let us hear His voice and get His orders every morning before we go out to work. When we have listened to that low voice and caught its accents, then we shall be able to press on to perfection.

CHAPTER XXXI

Filled with Laughter

"*When the Lord turned again the Captivity of Zion, we were like them that dreamed. Then was our mouth filled with laughter*" (Ps. cxxvi. 1).

It was in the most joyous moment of their life that these exiles laughed. The change from bondage to liberty and from banishment to home produced an excitation of feeling that could find vent in nothing so natural as laughter. They laughed and they sang. They clapped their hands and danced with their feet. Joy overflowed into every nerve and muscle. Eyes kindled, voices rang out, and laughter pealed forth in mirth. Their banishment was over: their captivity in a foreign land was ended. They had got once more home. It was like a dream. They could scarcely believe it for very gladness. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our voice with singing."

Laughter may proceed from two sources. It is often caused by observing some sudden incongruity of speech or dress; an awkward slip of the tongue in talk, or the appearance of the clown in the circus. Or it may spring out of the sight of "some eminency in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others." A boy boasting of his dancing powers slides and falls—the onlookers burst into laughter. The contradiction between the proud boaster and poor tumbler caused both a feeling of incongruity and of superiority that at once overflowed the nervous system and kindled

the eyes with mirth and filled the mouth with laughter.

Babylon was now beaten. Persia was put to shame. Nebuchadnezzar was a nobody. Israel was back to its native land. They had now the upper hand. Then mirth must find vent in laughter. Religion is not opposed to mirth, though it is directly opposed to madness in mirth. Against folly it protests. Blind and violent exhibitions of mirth do not suit its inhibitive self-control. But it takes sides with joy and with all its physical and intellectual exhibitions. "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice" came as counsel from one who had known every height and depth of life's experiences. Mirth may be sane: happiness may be rational: exultation of feeling may be sensible and useful.

It does us good to have a hearty laugh. Best of all when it is caused, not by another's inferiority-complex, but by the fine gift of humour, whose associations are with the bright side of life, and which sees great events on the little side, and petty events on their great side. It draws out our sympathy with the small and the trivial things of life, and places us on a footing of equality with everybody. That is a permanent trait of character in the best natures who peculiarly sympathise with human life in all its aspects.

Ask God for this invaluable gift. Cultivate sympathy joined with humour and mirth. Let us find our best Friend in God, and make Him our wealth and our joy. Then shall our mouth be filled with laughter and our voice with song.

CHAPTER XXXII

The "A Fortiori" Road

"For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life" (Romans v. 10).

There are two methods by which we may prove the existence of God. There is the *A Priori* road: "Every effect has a cause. God is the uncaused Cause of all things: the one unlimited and uncreated Creator." There is the *A Posteriori* road. "Every cause has an effect. The world has been produced, and shows the hand of the Producer."

Now St. Paul here makes use of an argument to give us stronger faith in God's willingness to save. We call it the *A Fortiori road.* If He reconciled us by His Son's death, won't he still more and with stronger reason reconcile us by His Son's life? Surely if by Christ's death I am saved, much more by His life shall I be sanctified. Death is darkness and the grave. Life is light and glory. He who has the key of Hades has also the key of Heaven. If He guide me through the one, He will surely also, and *a fortiori*, guide me on to the other.

Let us have stronger faith in this stronger reason for our faith. The foundation for our faith in the living Christ is firmer and more valid than that for our faith in the dying Christ. We love the Lord who died for us. We love still more the Lord who lives for us and lives in us. Bless God for the *A Fortiori* Road.

The springs of the Soul's history and success

are all found in the living Christ. A dead Saviour we could never trust. But one who died and rose from the dead and ever lives to intercede and guide, is an unfailing Power in our heart. These springs are not seen by the world, but are known to every believer. He has experienced the great joy of reconciliation. He has passed through the crisis of conversion, and found himself a new man in Christ Jesus. Here is a fountain, ever flowing and overflowing, out of which he can draw daily supplies. Shortage here there can be none. "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask what ye will and it shall be done to you."

Do we make daily use of this Divine help? Do we cash our cheques every morning at this Bank of Grace? It is open not only for elect spirits, choicest of the chosen, but every one, poorest and youngest and weakest, may come to partake. The living Christ is present to bless and help. He is the Christ of the twentieth century as well as of the first: the Christ of Scotland and of to-day. Let our Faith be one that appropriates His offers: that takes His promises to its heart, and extracts their substance and meaning.

This alone is practical religion. "Every day," said a weak sufferer, "I go to this Bank and draw my dividends." Quite right! We cannot do better. It pleases our living Lord when we thus daily draw upon His Grace, and are saved by His Life.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Great Saintly Souls

"*I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God*" (Rev. vi. 9).

These suffering saints were among the world's great souls. From them have come our Christian classics. The story of their doings stirs us. The words they uttered are an inspiration. Their letters we prize at infinite worth.

Sometimes it is only a sentence, like Bishop Ridley's "Courage my brother: we shall kindle a lamp to-day that will not be easily extinguished." Sometimes it is a *Pilgrim's Progress*, or an *Imitation of Christ*, or a Dante's *Vision*, or an Augustine's *Confessions*.

All of them are charged with vitalising force. They have perennial freshness. They are magnanimous souls, with throbbing pulsations of reality in them. Every word was pitched to a high key, and it does us good to tune up to their pitch.

They felt they were agents of a greater Power than themselves, and in this lay their strength. They became brave enough to suffer to the death for the Word of God and the testimony which they held.

Have we to-day any hope of reaching Saint-hood? Our life is so easy. We may all worship God now according to our conscience. Persecution for the Christian faith is a thing of the past. White robes washed in the Blood of the Lamb are not to be worn at any stake of the twentieth century.

There were plenty of them in the sixteenth, when David Stratin and Norman Gunlay were burned at the Calton Hill for simply expounding God's Word.

Sixty years ago there were martyrdoms in Africa, as three hundred years ago there were in England and Scotland. But Africa is now a land of liberty. The flag of England and France and Portugal flies over it, and the witch doctor is gone and the Christians are free to serve Christ.

Yet there have been great souls in Africa and great saints have sanctified its soil. Robert Moffat and David Livingstone were such. Alexander Mackay and Dr. Schweitzer were others whose lives were spent wholly for the Sudanese. Was not William Carey in India a saint? And James Chalmers a martyr in New Guinea? And Dr. Paton a pioneer in the New Hebrides, and Hudson Taylor a saint of God in China, and Father Damien another in the leper land.

And think of the Christian heroines, like Mrs. Judson of Burmah, and Dorothy Jones of the West Indies and Mary Slessor of Calabar! How stimulating to read their lives! What a grand passion for Christ possessed them! How tame do our lives seem when we come into touch with them! How small I feel beside Henry Martyn or Alec Mackay or Mary Slessor! What a spiritual afflatus blows from them! Their simple words have such a Christ-like cadence, such rhythmic exaltation of the consciousness of Christ in them that I love to read them. Lord, give us more of these Saintly Souls.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Knowing and Believing

"*We have known and believed the love that God hath to us*" (1 John iv. 16).

We have known the love of God; and we have believed God is love. Happy for us when the two go together. For many seem to know it, and don't believe it. And others believe it without fully knowing it. They have the evidence of belief, but they lack the certainty of knowledge.

Let us bracket them both together. We know God's love, and we thoroughly believe it. We enjoy the possession of the knowledge, and we rejoice in the assurance of the love. The one brings us certitude: the other gives us peace. By the former we get the vision of God's love: by the latter we get the virtue of His grace. There is no fear in love; perfect love casteth out fear. There can be no limits to knowledge; it will continually grow. Earth has given it in degrees: Heaven will give it in fullness. On and on it will go: wider and wider it will extend. Its horizons are ever expanding here, they will expand more there. Down here we have beginnings: up there we shall get the fruition.

"On earth the broken arcs;
In Heaven the perfect round."

Let us not be content to believe, but to go on to know. Our belief might be groundless if our

faith rested only in feeling. That faith would be deficient were it not grounded on correct knowledge. Know to believe, and believe to know. Get the wide horizons of sight; possess the sure foundations of faith. Then faith shall grow to sight, and Hope shall attain its full fruition. Your Heaven shall begin on Earth, and your Earth shall surely merge into Heaven. Get the joy of assurance, maintain the certitudes of knowledge. The shield of the Christian has two sides. On the one is carried the words, "The Lord knoweth them that are His": on the other is written, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Let us make sure of our standing in God's grace, and know our security in God's love. God is Love; He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. Know it and believe it. Believe it and know it.

CHAPTER XXXV

No Fretting, No Fever

"*Fret not thyself, because of evil doers: neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. Trust in the Lord, and do good*" (Ps. xxxvii. 1).

FRETTING is always foolish. It can work no good, but only do harm. Yet how many of us get into the fever of fretfulness and cease to put our trust in God.

Why do men sin in this way? They may have a temperament that inclines to discontentment. It sees the dark side of life, and finds mortification in many trifling happenings that never disturb other people. How easy is it, when we are looking out for affronts to find them! And then the day is filled with heart-burnings and disquietude: querulousness arises, we become that most unpleasant person called a growler, always airing our complaints, and living in the winter of discontent. The beautiful virtues of patience and contentment leave us, and we become very unlike our Lord.

Yet it need not be. There is grace to overcome our grumbling. How shall we get it? The text tells us "Trust in the Lord and do good." In Him is our Hope: and who can harm us? Why then be envious of the workers of iniquity? Their end is sure: their fate is fixed by heaven's decree. Trust in the Divine Overruler of all things and then go and "do good." Help the helpless, stand by the right-doing. Be the friend of the friendless. Get outside of yourself and occupy your mind with Christ's service. When envy goes and love enters and you count your blessings, the fret and fever will pass out of your life.

It is folly to fall into the fever of fretting. It is clear to every thoughtful mind that God governs all events. He stands at the helm and guides all the course of the voyage. If "our bread shall be given and our water shall be sure," we may rest contented. Better far is it to go out of ourselves by seeking to help the needy, to comfort the sorrowful and see how many are worse off than we are.

"Rest in the Lord" says the Psalmist, "and wait patiently for Him." That singer long ago knew the secret of the saints. That is our best anchorage in stress and storms. Quit it for a moment and we are among the waves. Abide in it, and our haven is found. Restlessness vanishes and fretfulness comes to an end.

CHAPTER XXXVI

LIFE'S SUPREMACIES

"*Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think—unto Him be glory in the church*" (Eph. iii. 20).

THIS text lifts us up into Life's Supremacies. Not only will God do more than we ask or think, but He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we imagine or crave.

As Mount Blanc, the monarch of mountains, towers above the lower range of the Alps, does this promise rise supreme. God's love toward us and for us is insurmountably high. The Apostle Paul rises in this glorious climax to a point beyond which he cannot reach. He bows his knees to the Father, and asks for the great family of faith that they be strengthened with power, and this after the measure of the riches of His glory.

Can any higher request be made? Yes! one much higher and better, for it is the source of all

power. "That Christ may dwell in their heart by faith." Can any better blessing be asked? Yes! one other, "That being rooted and grounded in love they may be strong to comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge and be filled with all the fulness of God."

What a comprehensive petition! Is it possible God can fulfil it? Or for man to reach and receive it? This thought leads to the next and drives St. Paul into the Doxology of the text.

It was a supreme moment in St. Paul's life, and it deals with the supremacies of our lives. We can ask large petitions, for in our prayers we are dealing with a King.

"And His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much."

Did not the Psalmist say he would be satisfied only when he awaked in God's very likeness? Nothing will really give our insatiable cravings satisfaction but being "filled with the fulness of God." The remission of guilt, the promise of pardon is not enough: we must have union with God Himself: not only to be "kept from falling," but to be presented before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." Our heaven-born aspirations are oneness with the will of the Highest.

St. Paul's desire is to see us rise to Life's Supremacies. He wants us to know the huge measure of the "Power that works in us," and have an enlarged heart with enlarged expectations.

Lord Jesus show us that our wants are really

the measure, not of our littleness, but of our greatness. Show us the possibilities of rising nearer Thee, far above all we can ask or even imagine. Let us accept no compromise with the commonplaces of religious people. We want more than forgiveness—we crave for communion—more than to escape from fear; we want fulness of joy: the deep joy of willing Thy will, of possessing Thy likeness, of being moved perpetually by Thy Spirit, and of knowing the Secret of Holiness. And when the religious world wonders in its own way that we are not at rest, we shall simply say, "Unto Him that is able . . . be glory and majesty for ever."

And all this will be "according to the power that worketh in us." Keep in constant touch with this Power. When the tramcar loses connection with the electric wire, at once it stops: its progress ends. Keep ever in touch with Him who is the Power of God and the Source of all efficiency. Make Him the Dynamic of your duty, the Spring of your Hope, and the Glory of your Life. Then you shall know something of Life's Supremacies.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE MARRIAGE BOND

"*I have called thee by name; Thou art mine*" (Isa. xliii. 1).

THE language is that of the marriage morning. The feast has come, and the Bridegroom is at the

altar claiming his bride. The ceremony is over, and he calls her by her new name. "Thou art my wife, and very own, my Love." All he owns is hers: all she owns is his. They are no more twain, they are one. The sealing kiss has been given. They are registered according to rule, they have been lawfully joined in wedlock. Love and law have completed the Bond. May he not rightly say, "Thou art mine"?

The Bible would remind us of this Marriage Bond. We are wholly unworthy of the honour. We have nought in us of meetness to merit the favour. But He has loved us with an everlasting love, and in lovingkindness He has called us. Let us respond to the call, and meet it with love. Enter the list of His loyal ones. Be one with Him in heart and mind and purpose. Feel you are one of the family and be worthy of your new name: He has given it to you: it was not earned: it was not bought. It is a gift of God. Rise up to its high levels. Walk along those levels and never leave them. Remember He has said, "I have called thee by name: thou art Mine."

Our birthright is in this call. It is the sure pledge of our inheritance in God. What is it that separates us from the beasts of the field? What have we that the lower creation cannot share? It is our adoption of God: it is our union with the Church's Bridegroom, and no one can rob us of this right. It is not a theory or doctrine: it is a fact, an experience, a life begun below, to be perfected above.

We are immortal before our death. We have entered the Canaan of God's rest and are now in our Promised Land. We have transcended the temporal: the eternal has begun within us. My Christian brother, possess your possessions. Hold by the Hand that holds you. Keep ever in touch with Him, and enjoy His smile. Say often to yourself, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." It will fortify your faith and keep the eye of your hope very clear.

A young maiden told me she had given her heart to God at the age of eight years, but now (at thirteen) she was "not quite sure that God had taken it. How could she be assured?" At once I took her to this text, "Fear not, I have redeemed thee: I have called thee by name: thou art Mine." "My dear child, there is no better definition of a true believer than that she is one who has fallen in love with Jesus Christ. Do you love Him?" "Yes, with all my heart." "Then be sure He loves you and says, 'I have called thee by name, thou art Mine.'"

It gave much satisfaction to her mind. She entered afresh into her covenant of love and got a great uplift in her young Christian life. Within a fortnight she commenced to teach a Bible class for children in her own home. In a few months she had won several of them to Christ.

Autosuggest to yourself over and over again, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Excuses Many

"*I pray thee have me excused*" (Luke xiv. 18).

It is so easy to make excuses. We find them in every corner and we meet them in every circumstance of life. They leap up at every turning of the way.

And if not found there, it is so easy to invent them, as these men in the parable did. A purchase of ground gave the first man an opportunity. "I must go and prove the ground and see if my purchase be good. Pray excuse me." The next had bought oxen, and he must yoke them to the plough. "Excuse me." The third had got married. "Excuse me."

We can find a hundred such excuses every day, and we can invent a hundred more.

For behind all excuses lie selfishness and indolence: the lack of energy and the lack of love. We will not take up Christ's service because it calls for what collides with secularity; it demands devotion to new duties. It insists upon the conservation of talents and time to a holy cause. It probably limits social engagements, and it may involve the world's dislike.

So we invent excuses. They calm our conscience and hide from us our falsity. They look well to the world, and satisfy it. They permit us to think we can serve Christ and yet serve Mammon at the same time.

It is so convenient "to run with the hare and yet hold with the hounds." "Kindly excuse me: at present I am so busy."

How can we conquer this spirit? Let us think who it is who calls us to the Supper Feast. It is our Lord and Master who has a right to demand our presence. It is One whose company is of the best: whose society is worth that of all others.

It is to a Feast of Love we are called: to a Communion with all the good and the consecrated. Where else shall we find such satisfactions and upliftings?

Come to Christ's Feast of Love. All things are ready. The Father waits: the Son invites. The Spirit is here to seal and sanctify. Make no more excuses. Bring your wife with you. Away with hesitation. Arise and come and sit down at the Banquet Table of the Household of Faith.

CHAPTER XXXIX

ONLY PARTIALISTS

"*Now I know in part: then I shall know even as also I am known*" (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

KNOWLEDGE to-day is as wide as the world. Science has now included every possible side of life within its categories. The farthest off star has revealed its structure to the telescope. The microscope has searched its way into the movements of the infinitesimal diatoms and desmids. Nothing is beyond our knowledge: nothing is beneath our notice. The infinitely small is of as much importance to us as the infinitely great.

Yet we know but in part. Every new discovery convinces us of our previous ignorance. The

more we penetrate into the arcana of nature, the wider the view we take of Science. The broader our outlook over the great field of Philosophy, the more convinced we are of being Partialists in knowledge. And if partialists, seeing only one or two sides of truth, we are necessarily prejudiced. We have not the all-round view: our judgment, therefore, cannot be just. We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But one day we shall know on a much larger scale. In Heaven we shall be ever growing in knowledge, ever progressing in wisdom. And in comparison with that extended knowledge we must say that here we know only in part.

Let us remember the narrow limits of our knowledge. Pray God may forgive the partiality of our judgment. See that it ever be the judgment of charity. Be careful to hear all things, hope all things, and never fail by narrowness of outlook. Cultivate very wide horizons. Banish the narrowness of bigotry. Be as broad as the Charity of God. Then shall we be worthy of a place in the Land where all is loyalty and truth and love.

CHAPTER XL

HAVE COURAGE

"*For the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows*" (Matt. x. 31).

THESE timid people were troublesome to Christ. Timidity is so unmanly. Every one dislikes the poltroon who shows the white feather and the faint

heart. Jesus loved the bold Peter who could jump into the waves and walk to his Lord. But even he at last wavered and denied his Lord before the High Priest's servant.

How fearful the majority of people are! We have hundreds of phrases for fear: it is so common. Men, we say, have white livers: they are chicken-hearted: they live in fear and trembling: their courage oozes out at every pore: they are pusillanimous, dastards, effeminate, have Dutch courage: are abjects, recreants, craven curs, and cannot say "Boo" to a goose.

That is why the Bible is so full of "Fear nots." They fill the Old Testament and the New. "Fear not, I am with thee, be not dismayed, I am thy God." "Look at the sparrows," says Jesus. They trust God and find their food daily provided. They have many hawks watching to kill them: yet your Father watches even a little sparrow's fall: and He numbers the very hairs of your head. Fear not, therefore. Be confident, be courageous: Venture on His Word. Faith is a venture and adventure. Trust God: hold His hand: cleave to Him, and you shall not fare worse than the sparrows.

How we love to look on Courage! Robert Bruce at Bannockburn; William Wallace at Stirling Bridge; Joan of Arc on horseback facing the pointed spears; David Livingston fronting the lion; Mary Slessor defying spears and bows of Calabar tribesmen, and snatching the little hated twins from their murderous hands. Who can keep back tribute from such? Every heart yields homage and honour.

Yet how many Christians live in fear! Yet God's promises of help are there to every one who will claim them. God help us to be courageous! God help us to defy the Devil! God help us to put aside all fear of man. We should not like to be a dare-devil or bully. But Lord save us from fainting before these enemies, or being white livered when men malign Christ, and turning tail when His cause demands a firm front and a plucky testimony. Then let us be no recreants. Give us the heart of a lion, not of a deer.

"Why should I fear the darkest hour
Or tremble at the Tempter's power?
Jesus vouchsafes to be my Tower.
Tho' hot the fight, why quit the field?
Why must I either fly or yield
Since Jesus is my mighty Shield.
I know not what may soon betide,
Or how my wants shall be supplied,
But Jesus knows and will provide."

This is the spirit in which to face the enemy.

CHAPTER XLI

Possess Your Possessions

"*On Mount Zion there shall be holiness; and the House of Jacob shall possess their possessions*" (Obad. 17).

That is a wonderful saying to come from an Old Testament prophet. How clearly he pierced to the heart of things. He saw many who did not really possess their possessions. They held them only

as rack-renters. Or they had riches which are "kept to their owners for their hurt." In short, their wealth owned them, not they their wealth. This is a reversion of the right order. Money has become master which ought to be servant. The life has yielded itself to the lust for gold. It has given up its liberty for a humiliating slavery. It is held where it ought to hold. It is owned where it should have been an owner.

This is not wealth: it is sheer want. Wealth lies within a man: money lies without him. The one is of the soul; the other is of the purse. The former constitutes a man's life, the latter is but an entry in his ledger. The rich nature finds its wealth everywhere. Every field has for it green pastures: every valley offers it still waters. The sweetness and the bitterness of life are alike within us; and we get from the world just the wealth we bring to the world. As soon as we can say, "He restoreth my soul," everything is restored. We have come to possess all our possessions.

Let us learn this most healthful lesson. We must own ourselves ere we own our wealth. We must be filled of the Spirit before the fulness of the earth can be ours. If we ourselves are at rest, all things become restful. The moment I can say, "God is mine," I can say "All things are mine, the world, and life and death. All are mine because I am Christ's." The winds become our messengers: the flaring lightnings our ministers; and the clouds bend down to make our chariots. Only get peace within ourselves and all the face of creation becomes peaceful. Smile upon it, and it will

answer with its smile. The joyous heart makes all things joyful. He that owns Christ owns all the world.

"I am Thine own, O Christ;
Henceforth entirely Thine;
And life from this glad hour,
New life is mine."

CHAPTER XLII

LIFE'S TRANSPARENCY

"*We look not at the things which are seen; but at the things which are not seen*" (2 Cor. iv. 18).

WE look at these visible things, but we also learn to look through them. We see the stone wall of Difficulty in front of us, but we see through it and beyond it. We pierce its clumsy thickness; for we are clairvoyants. We behold the temporal; but behind and beyond it we can discern the eternal.

The first thing seen is but the shadow: the second thing seen is the substance. On the one side we observe a solid; on the other side the solidity vanishes, and the reality appears. Life to the Christian man is a transparency. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." Here we are but partialists and notice the world only on one side. The spade is but a spade, the ledger only a ledger book, the yellow primrose but a primrose and "nothing more."

Did we have a sight of both sides how different should life be in its totality! No longer tiny and trifling: no more puny and insignificant. The

ledger with its cold tables and annoying calculations would be seen to be a book of God. The Lexicon, at which the young student labours, would shine with new meaning: it is his training ground for Heaven. The mill girl's loom is a machine in which she is really weaving the web of her own life, and is working faith and love and all the virtues into its warp and woof. The clerk's office, the merchant's shop, the banker's counter, they are not places for making money only, but for forming character. The teacher must consider her school, not so much a place for making scholars as for creating souls.

If we would perfect and ripen the eternal element in us, it will best be done by consecrating all the uses of our daily work, serving God while we serve others, and ever recognising the unseen in the seen. The daily task will furnish us with all needful opportunities.

"Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

The temporal is but the scaffolding of the eternal. And one day the scaffolding shall be removed. The Eternal alone will stand.

CHAPTER XLIII

CUMULATIVE GRACE

"*For of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace*" (John i. 16).

JOHN was Forerunner to Jesus, and he never spake a finer word than this. It is a wonderfully fore-

telling prediction of one of the great principles of Christianity.

The gifts of Christ are all cumulative. His grace once given, brings more grace. His Bank pays in compound interest. As money is said to make money, so grace makes grace. The law of Political Economy operates in the Christian Economy.

If we do a kindness to-day, we shall find it is easier to do one to-morrow. The word of witness for Christ once spoken begets a readiness to speak another. One kindly visit paid induces us to pay a second. The pleasure of the one demands a repetition of the pleasure. Speak the whole truth one day, and it is easier to utter it next day. Act generously once and again, and yours will soon be the character of the liberal giver. Convert your fine feelings into action, and they grow keener every time by the repeated acts. Action and reaction interpenetrate. That is a great psychological law.

Few people think deeply and reason out matters to conclusions. Begin to do so, and find the high pleasure that accompanies the operations of the intellect. New ideas burst into view, fresh images arise: wide and unsuspected connections are discovered. Soon you get to know the great delight that came to Descartes in pursuing his logical course of thought and initiating the greatest movement in Modern Philosophy.

Think truly, live truly, and truth will possess you and be your best possession.

This is the principle of Cumulative Grace.

John the Baptist was a far-seeing prophet when he announced this principle.

Out of God's fulness have we "received it." The bounty was never earned by us, nor purchased by our fine prayers or beautiful devotions. It was "received." All grace is a gift. Out of its fulness let us receive plenitude of power, of love and of wisdom. Out of that unbounded plenitude we may enrich our spiritual poverty. From this abundance of wealth we may supply every spiritual want.

Every time we beg God's gracious assistance we shall get more assistance. Every morning that we open our windows to God's sunshine, we shall get new light and shun the sin that would close the shutters. More light is given for light used: more grace for the grace exercised: more help for help accepted. If we increase our indebtedness to God, it seems to be a paradox, but we really add to our wealth. We grow rich by growing poor, and drawing on His rich Bank. The more we are emptied the sooner we are filled. There is always grace for grace, and for that grace we ought to be very grateful.

CHAPTER XLIV

HEROIC EXERCISE

"... *Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me*" (Matt. xvi. 24).

IT is wise to daily practise this precept. If there is no denial of our greedy and lazy self, there will be danger of a moral collapse. William James says

that if there be not the daily cultivation of the faculty of effort, life will prove a failure. That effort cannot be made without some gratuitous struggle against indolence, the parent of so many vices. A little heroic exercise in self-denial is a tribute to our Christianity.

How can we assure ourselves that we are Christ's when there is not self-denial in our life? It is impossible to influence others for good unless they see this principle influencing us. All the great Saints of the Church have been men and women of great self-denial. Think of Augustine in his later life. Call to memory Francis of Assisi. Our easy lives seem very unheroic beside theirs.

They bravely faced poverty with its many hardships. They bore cheerfully the world's scorn and jeers. They endured imprisonments and scourgings with patience; they faced death with courage. Where are we in our easy cosy lives beside Origen and Chrysostom? beside Catherine of Sienna or that most brave and courageous saint of the cruel Diocletian times, Sebastian of Milan, who was first shot through with arrows, and recovered, and then beaten to death with clubs by the Emperor's orders. The artists paint him tied to a St. Andrew Cross, and arrows piercing his heart and head.

How bravely did these grand men and women take up their cross and deny self! Let us be stirred by their example and stimulated by their zeal. In these happy times of religious liberty and universal tolerance we must take care that we do not wrong the Cause nor deny Christ's Kingship nor shame

our Master by our half-hearted ministry. "Make Jesus King" is the motto of the Christian Student Movement: it should be the motto of every Christian man.

I shall never forget the archway I saw in the Turkish Temple at Damascus, once a Christian church of the ante-Moslem time, and still looking down on the miserable misrule of the Turkish Government. "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom." Let us repeat the words and get the benefit of their auto-suggestion into our deepest subconsciousness. Then they will well up into our emotions and colour our very dreams and sanctify our speech and teach us real self-denial.

CHAPTER XLV

THE RACE AND ITS FINISHER

"*Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith*" (Heb. xii. 1).

EVERY life is a race; and every race-course has a goal. Well is it for us if we know our goal, and be guided to it. For to be ignorant of this is to miss life's meaning, to court disaster, and to make the largest mistake that a man can make.

How shall I know the right end of my race? Has not Heaven endowed me with talents and gifts and tastes? And do they not indicate what Heaven wished me to be? If I was made to be a mason, let me not seek to be a minister. If I was made to

be a minister, let me not fall below that calling and be only a mason.

Let me also see that my life is consonant to the world's good, and to the welfare of society. We do not stand alone in life. We begin it in social connections. Three is the least that makes a family: better still when it is more. But from birth we belong to the social circle. And through society there runs a purpose, and it, too, has its race-course.

"Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the Suns."

The whole universe is impregnated with purpose. It is evolving to one great end; chance is not within it. God is guiding it on to the great goal. Why do we not discern this law of evolution and bring our life and our work within its complex movement?

Every great law of nature adds also to our conviction that the Universe is pervaded with Mind. Chance is a wrong word for the great Law of Probabilities based on the assurance, as Bishop Butler's Analogy proves, that law reigns and God guides.

Do we not through our use of this law of Probabilities insure our life to provide for our widows and children? Do we not in recognition of it plan for their welfare, choose their professions, send them to School or College, and seek to shape their future aright? All in order that they may the better run and reach their God-intended goal.

The world is pregnant with ends. Every man's race-course lies straight before him. It has its windings and its ups and downs: but also it has its end. Let us know it and run with patience the race set before us. And ever keep an eye fixed on the Finisher of our Faith. Then the prize will be won and the end be gained, and Heaven be ours for ever.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE PRESENT MOMENT

"*Be not therefore anxious for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious for the things of itself*" (Matt. vi. 34, R.V.).

BODILY burdens are ill to bear. Mental loads are still more difficult to carry. "Take no thought for the morrow" was the wise counsel of Christ. It is better brought home to us by our Revisers, "Be not anxious about next day." It will look after itself quite well. There will be the needful help for its every trial.

Think of to-day and prepare for it. Live well through all the present hours and you shall better fit yourself for the coming hours. The present moment is the important moment. Concentrate upon its duties. Meet every minute with cheer. And be sure that when you have surmounted the difficulties of to-day, the difficulties of to-morrow will be just so far diminished.

"Be not therefore anxious." Anxiety only troubles and disturbs the mental balance. It multiplies our misery and it darkens our outlook. Said a young man to me, "I am unwilling to join

the church and make a public confession of faith: I might not hold out." "You have not got to hold out" was my reply, "you have just got every day to hold on to Christ, and let Him hold on to you."

The long view of life has its use. It teaches us true proportions and keeps the great end in view. But short views are also very helpful. They tie down our mind to the present moment. They help us to give attention to the work in hand, and to take the next step that is needful. Did not Newman express it well in the perfect lines.

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

Be intent on keeping step with Christ to-day. That being done, it will be all the easier to keep step with Him to-morrow. Be not over anxious about the future, it will take care of itself. Do not carry your cares before they come. Most probably the dreaded event never will arrive.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE SONG OF THE BIRDS

"*The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land*" (Song of Solomon ii. 12).

IN Spring optimism is irresistible. Winter is gone; April the opening (aperio) month has come. Hope is in the air; life is everywhere insurgent. The glad Gospel of the Resurrection sounds its words aloud, "Arise my love, my fair one, and come

away." Death has given way to life. Lift up your voice and sing.

Let us hear God's voice in Nature. There is inspiration in her voice as well as in Scripture. What wonderful revelations do we get nightly in the grandeur of the star-strewn sky! Who can fail to see the Hand that holds up the Heavens and guides Orion across his western way, and keeps the Pleiades in their place? "It is too wonderful for me," said one Saint, "I cannot attain to it."

Not less is the power of God visible in the great Seasonal periodicities. How surely does Winter yield to the incoming of Spring. Never does the Sun fail to find his Parallax, and to return across the Equator in March and send his warm beams into the buds and burst them open into leaf and flower. The drama of the seasons carries in it inexhaustible marvels. The very birds know the coming of Spring, and set out on their migratory journeys to cooler climes. The swallow quits Africa, the swift leaves Egypt, the stork makes for Germany, and our fieldfares and redwings leave us for their nesting-places in Norway. "Whenever you tap Nature she seems to flow with purpose." Purpose and progress are there: revelations of God's Mind and Presence: The volume of Revelation is double.

"There is a Book who runs may read
Which Heavenly truth imparts,
And all the lore its scholars need
Pure eyes and Christian hearts."

Solomon had these and sang of Spring and the songs of its birds and the voice of its Turtle Dove.

They attracted him, and they should attract us. We shall find great uplift in our religion when we feel the fascination of the song of the dove, the flight of the swift, the calyx of the lily, and the corolla of the daffodil. They are part of the whole organic chain which Spring weaves into one web.

How little of its divine significance do many gather! Heaven open our eyes more fully to its meaning! Around us energies are at work transforming bud into flower, developing flower into fruit, and filling our fields with food for us all! Let us open our eyes to see it, and our ears to hear the songs it is singing and to know its deep significance.

CHAPTER XLVIII

To Give or to Get! Which?

"*God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth*" (John iv. 23).

Worship is a Divine ordinance. No Christian man can deny it or diminish its import. It demands humility, honesty, spirituality. It is a great means of grace: it is the best preparation for Heaven.

For what do you go to Church? If we ask people this question, the most common answer will be "To get good." Seldom does one get the right answer, "To give glory to God."

The service properly opens in every church with "Let us begin the public worship of Almighty God." Such worship is a giving, not a getting.

It is the giving of reverence, the paying of adoration to the Holiest.

Certainly we hope to find good for ourselves, and to get help in the Spiritual life: that goes without saying. But it is not the primary object of going to church. Worship precedes sermonising. It includes prayer and praise of the Deity. And these in every case precede the sermon, or exposition of the Scriptures.

The more we realise that we come to church to worship, the more we shall seek to lose ourselves in the solemn act. For heart and soul and mind and conscience are all involved in it. We bow in presence of the Creator of the Universe, the King of our souls, and the Head of the Church. If we approach our own King and Queen, we pay every respect to their Majesties, and the rules of etiquette are rigidly observed.

Let us be not less careful in our acts of worship. Our worship can never be too "high," if only it leads our spirits up to the Heights of Holiness. The form however must be filled with the spirit to give it worth and to make it truly worship. And every complete petition or collect should have our hearty Amen.

We yield homage to God also in listening attentively to His Word as it is read and expounded. There we learn His mind, and discover how we may serve Him. The service of the Church must also become the service of our life. The spirit of the Sunday must be carried into the work of the week till every day become a Sunday, and every meal a Sacrament. Then and then only do we

rightly translate our doctrines into duties, and our creeds into Christian character. We get in order to give. We receive in order to return.

CHAPTER XLIX

STORED TREASURES

"*How great is thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee*" (Ps. xxxi. 19).

MANY treasures are stored up for us. Browning sings of it as the hope of old age.

"Grow old along with me,
The best is yet to be;
The last of time for which the first was made."

St. Paul speaks of a crown which is laid up for him in Heaven, and of a great hope laid up for his Colossian brethren in the Gospel.

Every Bank of good standing has its large reserves. And in the Bank of Grace these reserves are of boundless extent. We may draw upon them in every extremity of need, without any fear of a refusal. Each cheque presented in prayer and in faith is honoured in fresh supplies of help to the child of God.

"I have gone to many friends when I was in distress," said a poor man. "Some were not at home: many had not the means to help me: others questioned whether I was so needy as they were themselves. But when I took to my knees and went straight to God the answer was ready, and the tone of welcome was so different." That experience

is common to all who know the path of prayer, and the secret of the saints.

When a Chaplain with the Black Watch in Egypt, I remember we sent steamers up the Nile with stores of food past the First Cataract to await us on the march. How could we otherwise have beaten the Mahdi? Similarly God has storehouses all along the path of our pilgrimage, and when old age comes, we shall find what is needful for it awaiting us. Sickness may visit us, and the needful patience will be given to bear it. Loss of our means may come, but there will be compensations awaiting. Death of friends may make our homes dark; but the Friend of Friends draws nearer.

The famine fell hard on Jacob, but the God of Providence had sent Joseph to Egypt to garner its corn and Jacob found his sons' sacks filled twice over, and himself set in a high place of honour.

Miss Anna Waring sings of this in one of her finest hymns:

> "My heart is resting, O my God,
> I will give thanks and sing:
> My heart is at the secret source
> Of every precious thing.
> And a 'new song' is in my mouth
> To long-toned music set.
> Glory to Thee for all the grace
> I have not tasted yet."

Both here on earth and there in Heaven grace is stored and goodness laid up for them that love God.

CHAPTER L

"And We are Sons of God"

"*Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God: and we are*" (1 John iii. 1, R.V.).

This is a text that strikes home. We really are what the Word of God calls us. Is it credible? Can there be Reality in the name? Sons of God!

We dare not assume to ourselves the title: it is so far above our deserts. Yet full of sin, altogether unworthy of such fellowship, by adoption we have been taken into the family, and "He is not ashamed to call us brethren."

Let us dwell on the wonderful manner of this love. It is from everlasting. Before ever the stars sang their morning hymns it existed: to the end of Time it shall compass our path about. The loves of earth begin and grow for a brief life-time; ere we know, our dear friend has gone the way of all the earth, and we are left lonesome. But this Divine love is wholly endless. An unchanging force of affection is in it! Can I grasp it? Behold what manner of love it is! Intense in its quality, infinite in its duration, and divine in its origin. What other love is like it?

Still more do we wonder when we think of all it connects us with. It began in the regenerating power which the Holy Spirit brought to bear upon us. It found us in the wild desert, waste and lone. It sets our feet on the path to Heaven and it establishes our going. Poor and lonely and unknown we

may now be, but we are Sons of God and heirs of Heaven. What we should most think of is, Are we ready for that High Place, among Heaven's Hierarchy? Would it really be a joy to us now to enter upon the pleasures of God's right Hand and live in the Heaven of the Holy? For these pleasures are what the unholy man would call pains. If Heaven were suddenly opened to our sight, would the vision startle us? Without doubt it would, unless the Spirit of it has already possessed us. It is not every soul that can rejoice to be a ministering spirit sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. To rejoice in that fully, we must be fully changed into its likeness. It is not death that demands this change; it is life. Even now the Spirit of the Sons of God must be working in us, sanctifying and cleansing every chamber of our being, emotions, mind and will. It is now and here we must see the honour and feel the privilege of being called the Sons of God and of saying "Yes! And we are."

CHAPTER LI

No Deception

"*If it were not so I would have told you*" (John xiv. 2).

In Christ we have great Hopes. Not only hopes of immortal life, but of high attainments in life. I see in the present world saintly lives and I love

them. We shall see and meet far more saintly lives in the next world. I see beauty around me here, though sin has stained most of it. Shall I not see beauty untainted there?

To-day is the midsummer time and my Manse garden is just a mass of loveliness. Lilacs are at their best: the red hawthorn is covered with its brilliant blossom. The lupins are pushing up their brilliant spikes. The carnations are bunches of odoriferous blooms. The pansies beat all in their beauty. I have some in front of me as I write. How sweetly they look into one's face. I cannot in words paint the lovely modest eye with its pencilled strokes to right and left. It is beauty undefiled, breathing of modesty, of love, and of a sweet graciousness.

If God has placed such specimens of beauty in my garden below, shall I not see a finer garden of beauty above? The loveliness of His work here assures me of a higher loveliness there.

Even in the outer world it is so: how much more shall it be in the inner world of character and grace! If it were not so He would have told us. Heaven will yet be the fulfilment of our highest hopes.

Just as men rise in moral excellence do they become clear on the subject of Immortality. It is one of the greatest of living forces. All through history, martyrdoms and missionary work among the heathen have been grounded in this hope. Not to escape a hell of woe, but to enter in a Heaven of Moral Beauty, of Holy Joy, of highest and best communion, that is the longing of our hearts, and

it is God-implanted. If it were a deception He would have told us.

The Hope is a deep instinct of our nature. It is rooted in us from birth. It would neither be just nor merciful for God to refuse to undeceive us on this point. He will meet and satisfy all the deep intuitions of our soul. They come from Him: His own Spirit has purified and cleansed them, and they speak to us of Immortality. If it were otherwise, the Son of God would have told us. He "goes to prepare a place for us."

CHAPTER LII

THE RENT VEIL

"*The veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom*" (Matt. xxvii. 51).

MANY wonders attended the tragic scene of Calvary. The earth itself shook: the Temple curtain was torn asunder. The Secret of the Holy of Holies was unveiled. The High Priest of Heaven had gone up to His priesthood there. The Holy of Holies was now above; or else it was to be with Him in human hearts.

No Priest dare now bar the way to God's presence. No Pope shall stand between us and the Most High. Everywhere and at all times we may find the way to our Father's footstool. There is now no need of a miraculous vision or of a voice to say, "the place where thou standest is holy

ground." Every mountain side may have its Temple: every home may be a Holy of Holies. Jehovah is with us and beside us, the "I Am" or rather the "I will be what I will be." "To your weakness I will be strength; to your worthlessness I will be worthiness: to your darkness I will be Light: to your death I will be Life."

The veil that once hid, no longer conceals God. He is to be apprehended by our reason: and to be grasped by our faith. Nature is to bring Him near, and show us new sides of His power. Revelation is to unfold His attributes and make Him more fully known. The Incarnate Son brings Him still nearer and unveils a hundred secrets of His love, His grace, His beauty, and His approachability.

If sin drew the veil over God's face, Christ withdrew it and revealed that force in all its fulness. We can now venture within the Veil and gaze without fear on the very face of the Holy One. Fear gives place rightly to love. Humility is ever present: but the bent knee does not prevent us from beholding. We should behold, and we should then reflect; like a mirror we ought to give back what we have seen. Regarding and reflecting Christ, we cannot fail to be transformed into His image. It is the work of the Spirit, who helps us first to see, then to love and then to admire. And admiration brings adjustment: love breeds likeness. We gaze on God and grow like to God. "Beholding as in a mirror the glory of God we are changed into His likeness by His Spirit."

CHAPTER LIII

A Full Reward

"*Look to yourselves that we like not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward*" (2 John 8).

The text takes us back to the Gospel of John. The words of Christ treasured there, tell the same truth. "These things I have spoken to you that your joy may be full." "Look to yourselves," says the Apostle, "that ye receive a full reward."

There is nothing wrong in seeking fulness. It all depends on what kind of fulness we seek. It should not be fulness of bread; still less a full purse, and large dividends. These breed dependence on money and pride of plenty. But what God wants us to have is not plenty of gold, but plenitude of grace. Do not miss the full measure, says St. John, of the gifts of the Gospel. Grasp its manifold grace. Make use of every one of its offers of aid for your service and of counsel for your guidance.

Be rich toward God: be millionaires in grace. Heaven holds back none of its goods from those who are heirs to its heritage. It wants us to invest them securely in cash of its own possessions. They may be among earth's poorest: but they are inheritors of ineffable wealth. Let them lay claim to their heritage and then make use of it in God's service. His Kingdom stands in need of all kinds of help. Despise nothing that can give aid to His work or forwardness to His cause.

Some are so exceedingly modest that they will not claim possession of the fulness of Christ's joy, nor of the plenitude of His grace. This is a false modesty: or rather it is not modesty at all, but simple cowardice. They lack the love that dares everything for Christ. They fall behind in the courage which springs from devotion.

They cannot dare to be a Daniel and to stand alone. What they surname their modesty hinders. Let us call things by their right names. Cowardice is cowardice, and indolence is indolence, and blateness is blateness, however they may be veiled under the name of virtues which they are not.

Aim at a full life. Seek a full experience of divine power. Have your heart full of love. Store your mind full of truth. Keep your heart full of warm emotion. Then, with such internal forces of the Spirit, seek to show the world the force of a full life in which Christ is All in All. Look to yourselves that ye receive a full reward.

CHAPTER LIV

THE MAJESTY OF MEEKNESS

"*The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way*" (Ps. xxv. 9).

THIS text is true for all time. Never once shall the humble be without God's help, gentleness is very akin to the Spirit of Christ. Modesty is part of the Christian make-up. Meekness embraces all the best virtues of religion.

It is not assertive of self. It knows nothing of pride or vanity. Far away is it from the self-righteousness of the Pharisee. It lies at the heart of Old Testament religion, as well as at the heart of Christ's teaching. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

It is still a primary condition in the life of prayer. We must not dictate to God in our petitions, but ask meekly for things accordant with His will. "No good thing will He withhold," but some things that we imagine will be for our good might only hurt us. These He will refuse to give, and modestly must we ask Him.

Nor is it less a primary condition to progress in the Christian life. The first step upwards is a step downwards. Pride tries always to ascend; meekness to descend. The one ever aims at more: the other is content with less. The former seeks to reach up and grasp: the latter to reach down and give. It never forgets that the Incarnate God stooped down to earth, became a Babe, went through all the moods of childhood, took on Him the humble estate of poverty, handled the tools of labour, and then went on to the Cross and hung between thieves. Oh, what meekness was Thine, our Master! How dare we ever worship the devil of Pride? Thy meekness was the proof of Thy Majesty: this grace verified Thy claims to Godhead.

It is to the meek He makes the promise of guidance. They wait on His will and He daily manifests it. The lowly mind is not likely to err "in judgment," for it does not seek selfish ends, and will quickly distinguish between right and wrong.

But the proud man soon forgets high principle and grasps with his greed at another's place. If only he can get up one step on the stair, it will not matter though he supersede another.

What is better than guidance? What should we ask more for than to be taught God's way. Life's whole success is wrapped up in this gift. Lord make us of the meek ones who get Thy guidance and find out Thy way.

CHAPTER LV

NOT TO CONDEMN

"*For he came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved*" (John iii. 17).

THAT truth rejoices my heart. It has such a triumphant note. Christ came not for our condemnation, but for our salvation. His mission was one of mercy, not of wrath.

Let my life be like His. Let Him save me from the captious spirit of the critic and fill me with the generous spirit of Love. We have so many who simply find fault. They would regenerate the whole world by pointing out its failings. But constant finding fault never makes a loving family. Home is consolidated, not by criticism, but by kindness. The bonds of society are laid in love. That alone binds together the homes: and the Empire is strong just as its homes are strong. Imperial unity stands on Imperial friendship. Criticism sunders: love unites.

My brother, find no fondness in condemning

society for its sins. Seek to save it from them. Be not of the critics who crucified Christ. They watched Him continually to denounce Him. They loved to discover faults and make them public. Watch thou for opportunities of kindness. Seek out words of love and encouragement. Go after the weary and heavy laden. Share their heavy loads of care. Bear a part in their burdens, and find excuses for many faults. Bethink thee of thine own, and then judge just judgment. Have they had your advantages? Did they drink of your overflowing cup? Did they ever sit down to such a well-laden table as yours? Give them sympathy in their sorrow and a lifting hand out of their miry clay. Never forget that the Lord Jesus came not to condemn the world, but to save it.

Let us, too, be Saviours of Society. Let us not be satisfied with our own salvation. "I'm dying and I go to Heaven empty-handed," was said by one on his death-bed with intense dissatisfaction. "I do not know of my having personally won one boy or girl to Christ," said with sorrow a Sunday School teacher to me; while another could modestly say she had won more than half of her class of young girls to her Lord.

At an after-meeting in a Mission Week, a young minister present was much overcome at the sight of so many "seekers" anxiously inquiring as to the way of salvation. "I have not yet had one such come to me," he said. "How is it?" I could only reply that he must preach this third chapter of St. John more forcibly and expound it fully, and he would soon have souls inquiring as to salvation.

We fail in this work for want of faith. And we fail, too, for lack of real love. Let us pray for more courage to lead us to introduce it into conversation, not in a forced manner, but naturally and kindly. Soon we shall be used of God to lead others to the Saviour. Christians should be more Christ-like. Jesus at Jacob's well is an example for us all. In this matter the Master was a model for wayside talkers.

CHAPTER LVI

WHOLENESS AND HOLINESS

"*Art thou in health, my brother?*" (2 Sam. xx. 9).

IT is our commonest salutation to-day. How do you do? Are you well? Health is invaluable; before wealth or renown, or high place; any one of which, without it, can bring but little satisfaction. The poor labourer with good health, good appetite and good heart, can laugh at misfortune and needs to envy no one.

Health and healing, and whole and holiness are all from the Anglo-Saxon word signifying prosperity. Wholeness and holiness are closely and etymologically connected. Seek to possess a healthy body, a healthy mind, and a healthy soul. Every healthy Christian should be a happy man, and happiness is very promotive of health, both of body and mind.

The essence of happiness consists in the sense of forgiveness. It was indeed a happy day which fixed our choice on Christ, and the marriage bond was sealed, and we got what Samuel Rutherford called "the sealing kiss." The result was spiritual healing, religious health and vital holiness.

What are the proofs of the possession of these qualities?

(1) A healthy Christian enjoys a good appetite. His morning meal is on heavenly manna, freshly fallen. He feeds on the solid food of the Divine Word. He can enjoy the light soufflé of literature also. But he begins the day with a heavier repast. The taste of many has been spoiled by feeding on literary confectionery. Novels take the place of truth. A minister confessed how the morning *Scotsman* at the breakfast table stole away the time he should have given to God's Word. He banished the newspaper till noon, and found enormous spiritual benefit for his soul and his studies and correspondence.

(2) This good appetite builds up a believer in a strong character. He gets backbone of conviction. He stands firm on the rock of unchanging truth. He does not swither at some sudden change of taste, or some new ecclesiastical fashion or foible. The critics do not hurt his creed with their historical teaching of early times. He understands and judges for himself. He grows in daily grace. All the virtues named in the Beatitudes get embodied in his character. His boughs bend low with loads of fine fruitage—meekness and mercy, justice and truth are his adorning. Men cannot but see the

sincerity of his belief in the integrity of his heart and conduct. The market place as well as the church knows the wholesomeness of his piety.

(3) He has daily guidance from God's Spirit. He does not boast of it nor cast his pearls before swine. But it is there and it leads into healthy and holy living. Happiness comes with Holiness. Heaven enters his heart, before he enters its golden gates. He knew its joys here; in a far fuller and higher sense he shall know its wholeness and holiness there.

CHAPTER LVII

True Independence

"*A good man is satisfied from himself*" (Proverbs xiv. 14).

The good man is not a mimic. He borrows from nobody. Too often books are composed merely of quotations from others and are conspicuous by the lack of originality.

Self-confidence need not be sinful. It is not necessarily pride. The good man has it, because he is satisfied from himself. He is not left to the mercy of others and is no mendicant for their favours. He cultivates his own garden, and develops his own gifts. God put him here, gave him his endowments, says "Use them in My service, till this corner of My garden for Me," and he is content to do so. He has no need to borrow blessings or to import his happiness from abroad.

Nor does he desire to catch the eye of the spectators. He is satisfied if he is working in the right direction, doing his duty, serving God in the place assigned to him.

Others are never at ease. They dress for effect: run for the public prizes: climb many stairs to success: seek the approbation of the market place: aim at winning appointments: covet the short popularity of the showman: grasp at the values of the pushful trader.

1. It is not easy always to discriminate between the self-trust which is Christian and that which is akin to selfishness. Yet they are very different. To be true to one's real self is to abide by the make and bent that God gave one at birth. As was said of Alfred the Great: "Good fortune accompanied him like a gift of God. He felt he was himself and was not daunted by difficulties. The fulness of the man ran over into all his deeds." He was more than them. He had huge reserves of goodness behind them. He could find satisfaction in himself.

2. It is the good reader that makes the good volume. To one, Shakespeare is only a jest book: to another "a guide to the Pierian spring," a source of highest ideas, an inspiration to noble living. Milton to one man is so many elegiacs, and he counts them by triplets and quatrains. To another he is uplift into the company of the very noblest, and an introducer to the world's best society. It depends on what the reader brings to the reading of the poet. Have the soul of poetry before you

approach the pages of the poets. Bring your best; and they will meet you with their best.

3. The good man does not require to go to earth's foul cisterns. He has within himself a "well of water springing up to life everlasting." This is the finest promise Jesus ever gave. May we know its wealth, and experience the plenitude of happiness which it brings. It is a Bank which never breaks. Make use of this golden mine, and be satisfied from yourself.

CHAPTER LVIII

BUILDING TABERNACLES

"*Let us make here three tabernacles: one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias*" (Matt. xvii. 4).

IT was a fond wish, begotten by a vision. A tabernacle would keep the heavenly visitants. They would stay on earth, and the disciples would have the Society of Heaven down here.

But it was the prayer of mere impulse: the outcome of ignorance. Not on the heights of Tabor, but down below at the base, their work was waiting. The demon-possessed boy was writhing in agony and claimed their help. Let their vision inspire them to service, and so accomplish its end.

Moses, too, had a vision: it went on to Tables of Stone; and Israel had to give it interpretation to the world. Habbakuk had his vision and was bidden "write it plain on tables," and so imprint it on his own heart, and on those that heard him.

In some luminous hours, sent of God in love, we have had a vision of the possibilities within our reach. Perhaps we wrote them down like Coleridge and Burns? Did we commit them to reality and translate them into fact? That is what God means by granting us visions.

It may only flatter our vanity to have a vision of ourselves, as being great men and in lofty places. An author dreamed that the book he had printed was in a second and improved edition. He sat down next day and rewrote it at the cost of much labour; and in twelve months it was ready just when the publisher called for it.

We must live out our dreams to prove that they have been given of God. Raphael explained to a friend his skill in painting by affirming that he saw the Madonna first in a dream and instantly rose and took out his brushes and painted her. Even then his beauty in his dream was far before the picture he transferred to canvas.

It is well to have high ideals. They uplift our mind, quicken our emotions and help to action. But this is so only when they are transformed into conduct. What a wasted life was Charles James Fox's because of this lack of transcription. And how grand that of Wilberforce, who saw like Fox, but whose insight became sanctified and passed into seed sown for the slave's liberation. A wasted genius like Coleridge marks want of will and lack of character.

There are no limits to the sweep of ideal thought or the possibilities of dreams, except the limits of our power to pass them on into effect.

The discovery of new truth is precious: but nothing is more harmful than lawless mental speculation. Let us reduce our ideals to realities, and realise our dreams in better service. It is the great lesson of the Mount of Transfiguration.

CHAPTER LIX

RIGHT-DOING ITS OWN REWARD

"*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and running over*" (Luke vi. 38).

GOD will never leave us in His debt. He is the giving God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth none. Like the Sun in the Heavens, He is ever pouring forth from Himself.

He is the Universal Giver, and He loves that His children should be like Him. But does not the text trifle with us or at least present a motive of meanness? Shall I give in a right spirit if I am to get back other gifts in return? Does not the promise of Christ promote a spirit of bargaining? Is my liberality to be compensated? Is it then any better than a clever mode of securing a larger gift pressed down and running over.

Nay! do not mistake the Lord's meaning. The right reward of doing good is the power to do better. Give most liberally and there shall come to you the fine spirit of Liberality. Offer your gifts unstintedly, and be richly rewarded with a still more liberal spirit. The dower of that grace will be superabundant. Heaven pays in its own coin;

love for love: goodness for goodness: charity for charity: brotherliness for brotherhood.

When God shall call us home we ask no wages but that which makes His truth to be triumphant. In His triumph we triumph, in His will being done our will is done. In winning souls for Him are we not winning our own soul? In kindling affections for Him in others, do we not get our own soul kindled? We cannot do His work, but He honours us in doing it through us. We cannot lead a soul into His fold, but we enter ourselves and get our share of the green pastures and the still waters.

Glorious is the labour: rich the reward, pressed down and running over. Whenever we give to God He gives to us again of the spirit of goodness. He pays us not in money, but in kind: both here and hereafter.

What are the rewards of Heaven. The hidden manna: the morning star: the name on the white stone known only to the receiver: to go no more out: all blessings and gifts of the inner life, and all of the kind God is giving us here multiplied and made eternal. We shall never get to Heaven unless Heaven first come to us. Here we must gain the spirit of the Holy: and there we shall get more of the same spirit. The good for the good; the holy for the holy. That is Heaven and nothing else. Right doing is its own best reward, and we want nothing better.

"I want no other wages
When Thou shalt call me Home
But to have shared the triumph
That makes Thy Kingdom come."

CHAPTER LX

Our Firm Foundations

"*For their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges*" (Deut. xxxii. 31).

That Rock that followed the Hebrews and daily satisfied their thirst in the desert was God Himself. The cloud was the symbol of His presence: the Rock was the assurance of His love. Their bread was given them: their water was sure.

But their enemies had no such supply. Their wells failed them; their idols could not help. Even they, as judges, had to lament their lack of water. Their faith ended only in failure.

Is it not so still? The foes of our faith to-day must confess the weakness of their defences. There are few living springs of water in our modern *Materialism*. No Creator to crown the world's origin: no Father to love its living creatures: no Guide to hold our hand and to still the storms of our sorrows. Nothing but an Organism working out its own destiny by means of its own self-made machinery. Who can believe in such a self-contradictory creed? *Matter made itself*: or it came from star mist that must have made itself somewhere in the vast spaces. To put the origin back for millions of ages and away into the eternal distances, and the minutest particles of dust—does that diminish the wonder? Does that do away with the need of a Creator? Even dust does not come out of nothing. And whoever heard of dust doing the part of Omnipotence and making stars and planets?

The evidence is notoriously weak and worthless. "Their rock is not our Rock, our enemies themselves being judges." Christianity draws up its line of logical defences. It bases on facts open to the simplest intelligences. "In the beginning God." That is its basal Rock: one all-sufficient Cause, Himself Uncaused. One Omniscient Guide, Himself unguided. One great End to it all in the Heaven of the Holy, the Home of Love into which shall be gathered the best and the bravest from all the cycled times.

Is not that a strong Rock of Defence? Does it not win the convictions of every honest-minded man? What line of evidence for a personal God has the Pantheist? He is found to-day in philosophy: which is satisfied with a world that is all-God. But if all lesser streams run into God and He is the Ocean in which they lose themselves, our personality has perished. Death is the end to us individuals; we die and are doomed, and have only the consolation that we may return in some other shape and as other beings re-incarnated. We ourselves perish, but the race goes on. Be satisfied with one brief life! The race is imperishable!

Our hearts refuse that consolation. Our intellects reject the evidence. The deepest intuitions of our nature tell us of an Immortality. Plato asserted it in lofty language. The humblest peasant instinctively feels it and believes its innate evidence. It is irrefutable. "Their Rock is not our Rock, our enemies being judges."

CHAPTER LXI

The New and the Old

"*And there is no new thing under the sun*" (Eccles. i. 9).

Here you have the puling complaint of a pessimist. That which hath been shall be. He wants change. Yet change is only a chance. The new promises some novelty, yet he is not sure it will fulfil its promise.

Some depreciate the Past and exalt the Present. Koheleth depreciates the Present and exalts the Past. Everybody has his bias. We stand between Scylla and Charybdis, between over-valuation which stands by antiquity, and the modern drift from old moorings.

All men seek a Paradise of some sort, either in the days that have been, or in the days yet to be. The one is the tendency of the ultra-catholic: the other the tendency of the ultra-protestant. The former, like the Greeks, thinks of a golden Past, and finds Authority descending from it. The latter thinks the Past was the childhood of Humanity, and presses forward to a goal far down the Future. He feels he is "the heir of all the ages," and living in the foremost files of time, and would rather have "fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay."

And the Word of God justifies the feeling. The great purpose of God's Revelation ran progressively through the Old Testament, and on to the end of the New. It contains the stages of an ever-advancing

spiritual life. St. Paul saw clearly the working of this principle and emphasises it in his Epistles to Galatia, and to Rome. Christ is the Head of the whole human race, and the centre of its history. He, says St. John, is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. "There is nothing new under the sun," but the sun renews everything. Out of Winter he brings Spring, and out of Death he brings life. The New is latent to the Old; the Old is patent in the New.

Each Spring is new and we welcome it. Each Science is new, and we hail its revelations. Christianity is ever new if we go through its normal experiences. Our Birth into its Life is new when its Spirit recreates us. Old things then pass away, and all things become new.

Christ becomes entirely new to every new-born soul. It sees in Him a new Beauty, and finds a new Ideal. It is lost in admiration of a new Model. And this Admiration is the dividing line between Spiritual Death and Spiritual Life. It is the prophecy of the coming perfection of the Christian man. What we admire is surely allied to ourselves. Like can be known only to like. Love is not beautiful to selfishness, nor purity to foulness, but only to love.

The best of it is that the Beauty which attracts us in Him is first in us! It is His love in us that makes us fall in love with Him. Our longing for Him is the proof of our possibilities. One day we shall be like Him when He makes all things new.

CHAPTER LXII

Prayer and Patience

"I waited patiently upon the Lord, and He inclined unto me and heard my prayer. He brought me forth out of an horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; He set my feet on a rock and established my goings and put a new song in my mouth" (Ps. xl. 1).

This is a full statement of the rich blessings received by waiting on God. Patient waiting brought a plenitude of gracious dealings. God's ear was bent down to catch every accent of the cry. The prayer was at last heard and answered.

The Psalmist was lifted out of his horrible pit of distress, some miry and filthy experience into which he had unfortunately fallen: Some Slough of Despond or dissipation that had entangled his feet and fouled them with its filthy mire. He was saved and sanctified, delivered and cleansed. His feet were now set on a firm rock, and best of all his faith was confirmed and his conduct established. How many mercies followed his prayer! What splendid answers to that period of petitioning.

And then the outcome of it all is a Song. And a new song—one added to the list of old songs—a song of praise to his Divine Protector for his deliverance from this Slough of Foulness.

Let us learn to wait long upon God and be patient with Him as to the time of answer. Lie low and long at His feet. Then will assuredly come the quickening grace of His spirit, and the establishing assurance of a rare experience. Lord grant

that our patient prayer may at last bring Thy uplifting power. Raise us out of weak despondency. Deliver us out of all darkening doubt. Save us from all miry ways. Rescue us from greed of gain, and lust of evil, and the dreadful grip of mammonism. Teach us that libertinism is not liberty: that licence in lust is not at all freedom of spirit: that it is slavery and mire and filth and all uncleanness.

Sin offers gold, but it only is gilded. Get your goings established in grace. Get your feet placed firmly on the Rock of Ages. Learn to act by Love where once you acted only by rule. Change law into liberty and be free to run in the way of God's commandments because you love them.

Then shall you know the uplift of answered prayer, and shall delight to wait often and long at your Father's footstool.

CHAPTER LXIII

BE FRIENDS WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"*And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me*" (Ps. li. 11).

WHATEVER friends we lose, let us never risk the loss of the Holy Spirit. It was David's loss that for a time he turned a deaf ear to the Divine Guide. Deeply did he mourn his error, and then wrote this fifty-first Psalm. "Uphold me with Thy free Spirit. Oh take not thy Holy Spirit from me."

The Spirit's work is to win us wholly to goodness. It is He who begins the process by convincing us of sin and generating repentance: who urges us to Christ and His cleansing Blood: who as Paraclete reveals the great atoning sacrifice and eternal love: who removes doubt and disperses fears and creates trust: who gives assurance of forgiveness and begets the feeling of Sonship: and who finally cleanses the conscience and sanctifies the soul.

How foolish and sinful it is by act or wish or secret sin to grieve the Holy Spirit! And how wise to heed His every suggestion and follow His guiding voice along the way which He indicates as the path of duty.

If He should leave the Church we should be no better than an army without a skilled general. In the first Church of Pentecost He was the recognised Supreme power. It was spoken of as the Outpouring of the Spirit, for He came down as comes the refreshing rain on dry, dusty soil.

In that living refreshment the Church of the first century found her vigour and strength, and made advances such as still cause us wonder and longings for the same spiritual Baptism.

Is there anything the Church of to-day more needs than to be refreshed and revived? True Revival can come only from the Holy Ghost. Let the church continually echo David's prayer, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us."

Such a new baptism of power would quicken the Church's life, would deepen her zeal, widen out her liberality, unify her members and make all her

various branches and sections realise where their oneness lies. Her continual prayer should be:

"Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound or doubt it, or deny:
Yes, with one voice, O world, tho' thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side for on this am I."

Can any one doubt the evidence of the Spirit's working? or deny the reality of His power in the believer's life? None, but such as have had no experience yet.

CHAPTER LXIV

A COURAGEOUS RETICENCE

"*When thou fastest . . . appear not unto men to fast*" (Matt. vi. 17).

CHRIST could not mean to advocate hidden piety, far less hypocrisy. He desires all His disciples to be honest and ingenuous. But the fasting of the Pharisees was a farce. By all means keep the body under. Control its appetites: compel it to be the servant, not the master. Yet do not parade your piety. Do not go about with a sour face, nor be a picture of dejection. All the time you keep down the appetite, keep up the spirits. Wear a look of mirth, because you have a heart of gladness and find your true joy in God.

The principle has many applications. Especially to sickness and physical suffering does it apply. The life of Frances Ridley Havergal supplies a fine picture of a constant sufferer with a constant smile on her face and uttering such words of trust and contentment as astonished her friends.

The life of Frederick Robertson of Brighton gives similar instances of acute pain wholly repressed. Dr. Stopford Brooke speaks of it in these words: "During Monday, Tuesday and the greater part of Wednesday (after the work of preaching) alone in his room he lay on the rug, his head resting on the bar of a chair, clenching his teeth to prevent the groans which the ravaging pain, even through the sleepless length of solitary nights, could never draw from his manliness." The illness might have been arrested by a six months' rest. But he never complained to his congregation or to his friends; kept it out of sight and so went on "not appearing to men to fast," telling his agonies only to God as his diary shows.

Other applications of the principle are to charity and the life witness. In our liberality it is well never "to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth." In our religious life we should let our witnessing for Christ be less by lip than by conduct and character. The testimony of the lip is at times needed; but after all, the life is the one evidence that tells and convinces.

There are love secrets known to husband and wife which are never told to the world. There are love secrets between Christ and His saints that are hidden in the heart.

Trials will meet the best of us and they will do well to keep a seal upon their lips when death enters the home, or some disgrace stains the records of the family.

In such reserve there is fine heroism. They appear not to men to fast. But God sees and knows

and takes count of it all. Therefore tell it not to men, but take it all to Him.

"Strength and calm for every crisis
Come in telling Jesus all."

CHAPTER LXV

GILT-EDGED INVESTMENTS

"*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep what I have committed to Him against that day*" (2 Tim. i. 12).

MEN talk much about safe investments. Where can I safely deposit my hard-earned savings with sufficient interest, yet also with sufficient safety? Is the Bank best, or are the Government Consols safer? Or shall I get higher interest in speculative companies?

Wise advisers counsel what is called gilt-edged investments. Trustees must by law lend trustee money only to such Companies or Government securities.

Does not the text tell us of such?

St. Paul speaks of what he had committed to the safe keeping of Christ. Could there be a safer place of deposit for his spiritual wealth? Is not Christ the very ablest guardian of our Destiny. No Trustee can rival Him in Trusteeship. It is folly to put an estate into speculation and risk all for a little higher return. Here is a Bank that will never end in bankruptcy. Commit your soul and

all its infinite interests to the keeping of your Lord. Let His will direct its use and His wisdom guide your management of it. "He is able to keep" and at last present you and it faultless before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy.

With Christ there is Safety for the loan and also Security for the interest. His service pays. The reward is sure and is such as cannot be taken from us. It comes back with compound interest, capital and income together. Do good, and you get goodness. Serve Christ honestly and you get its rich reward in more honesty. Your capital augments and your interest grows.

CHAPTER LXVI

THE SECOND MILE

"*And whosoever shall compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain*" (Matt. v. 41).

WONDERFUL is the witness of the second mile. It is the test of true friendship. As to the first mile it is a matter of formality, but the second mile gives assurance of love and of likeness.

In the East, when a Government order was issued, the messengers were pressed men, and each township was compelled to send on the command or message to the next. The royal crier was mounted, and his tired horse or mule was to be exchanged for a fresh one. The first man he met must provide the mule and let the King's messenger make haste. He gave the mount and had to accompany the messenger. If he wanted it only for one mile, let him have it for another mile. Loyalty is

shown by love, patriotism is proved by kindness. "Go with him twain."

We start our work in the morning and plan it out for the day. Suddenly another call, clear and commanding, comes and upsets the arrangements made. Necessity knows no laws: obedience only remains with us. We go one mile and feel inclined to say, "We have done our duty: it is needless to go farther." But the Christ-like spirit will gladly go the next mile.

We are asked to help a very needy neighbour. We give him the sum required to relieve his debt. But then we add kind words to our gift and warm sympathy. That is the second mile.

A hungry child comes to our door begging a bit of bread. We give her it, and also a biscuit and a bit of cake to make it go down. She wonders and thanks us with warmth. The little gifts make the second mile.

John Wesley found his happiness wrecked by his marriage. He had been greatly deceived. What did he do? Left home and gave himself to outside work and world wide evangelism, greatly owned of God. Wesley walked his second mile.

The *Odium theologicum* has poisoned not a few natures. Among the rest that of Ignatius Loyala's father. He burnt his son's fine clothing: then turned him out of doors a very beggar. Loyala only prayed for him: complied in every possible way with his wishes; finally got the better of his ill will; and if he never entirely won him over to the new service, won his esteem and respect. That was Loyala's way of walking the second mile.

CHAPTER LXVII

Foresight and Insight

"*Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer*" (Rom. xiii. 11).

How wise it is to know the present! How needful it is to know the future. If we fail to know to-day, we shall fail to know to-morrow. The duties of the one closely connect with the duties of the other. The first is the cause, the second is the consequence. The former must be filled full of meaning and work, if we are in the latter to fulfil the end of our life. As close as is the nexus uniting cause and effect, is the nexus which binds together every day of our existence. We cannot disconnect them without destroying life's unity and solidarity.

Therefore the two gifts we most of all require to pray for are Insight and Foresight. We must discover our fitness for our calling and then foresee its end, and find out its due proportions. The end dictates the means: the future governs the present. Then life becomes a Unity like God's, and ceases to be a duality. Harmony takes the place of discord and all our actions are unified by one great purpose.

Yet how many lack these two needful qualities. They have not insight to see their aptitudes, and so choose a calling which does not captivate them. Then they lose taste for these duties and become failures.

Others have insight, yet want foresight. They

do their daily work but do not perceive its connection with the great work of the world, and so miss the inspiring view of life's great meaning. Try to see the wide horizons of duty. Discover the lengths and breadths of your business. Behold it in all its correlations to the nation's commerce and government and success. Get into touch with the trend of the time. Find out the Spirit of the Age and of the Ages, and feel how its current draws.

If you mistake its meaning, you put yourself out of relation to the tendency of the times. It may be your duty to oppose that tendency or to modify it or to help it. But at any rate you must know and have insight into its push and its pull.

Then get Foresight of its final purpose. Discover to what great end it moves and what purpose it subserves. Then with such knowledge of its drive and urge you may make your daily duties bear upon it. And your life will be a success and not in any sense a failure.

Get Foresight into the wide horizons and possibilities of the Future. Have Insight into the purpose and possibilities of the Present. Unify both and make them build up your life into a great success. This will be profitable to man and honouring to God. Your life will be a failure without Insight. Your destiny will be unattainable without Foresight.

CHAPTER LXVIII

Young Jabez's Fine Prayer

"*Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and keep me from evil that it may not grieve me*" (1 Chron. iv. 10).

Here is a beautiful prayer from a young man. Jabez had a true idea of justice. He wished to do harm to none, and to do good to all. And for this end he prays he may be kept from evil. The earnest plea of the prayer shows the character of the man.

Our deepest longings exhibit our truest selves. We are what we think and still more what we feel. Hence we may often be better than we appear, as well as worse.

Evil is the bane of the world. It entered Paradise and soon ended it. Adam sinned, and Adam in consequence suffered. And ever since the world has been worsened by evil and the Evil One. Well may we echo the prayer of Jabez, "Oh that Thou wouldst keep me from evil."

Thank God we have the assurance of help in this battle. Our Father God will be with us in the fight against sin. The Lord Jesus died on purpose to deliver us from its guilt. The Holy Spirit proffers us constant help to break its power. The Triune God is pledged to be upon our side. Why fear the issue of the conflict with such friendly aid?

Only let us watch as well as pray that we fall not before temptation. The spirit is willing, but still the flesh is weak. The disciples fell asleep in

Gethsemane's Garden! Lay down to take their ease while the crisis of their Lord's conflict was at hand! "Could ye not watch for one hour?" He asked. No! not through that one hour of storm and stress! And they were the chosen Twelve! We must watch and wait, as well as pray.

And we must learn to claim the promised help. God promises, but He likes to be asked. Many cry but do not claim. They repeat loudly their petitions; and there they end. They must know how to step forth in faith claiming the promise and walking, as St. Peter did, on the yielding waters. Realise that you lean upon Omnipotence and not upon a broken reed. You know Him and He knows you—all your impotence and your ignorance of the untried way. Trust Him and claim His guidance. Have courage, be brave, faith should be fearless.

Further, this fight is to a finish. Not for one brief hour! not merely a fine dash at the enemy—a brilliant cavalry charge, and all is over and victory is won. No! It is a daily tussle. Hand-to-hand grips with a ruthless and skilful enemy, who knows our weak points and where and when to attack us. But if we grasp God's hand and claim His grace hourly, we shall win; for we shall then be strong at our weakest point.

Date Due

Je 8 - '38	O 7 - '43		
Ag 9 '38	N 11 '43		
S 13 '38	Je 19 '44		
O 19 '38	O 16 '44		
Mr 8 - '39	O 16 '44		
Ap 27 '39			
Je 21 '39	Ag 20 '45		
O 9 '40			
Ap 29 '40	F 5 '46		
Ag 20 '40	Ap 2 '46		
F 4 - '41			
Mr 10 '41	NO 30 '48		
S	JY 31 '50		
O 13 '41			
D 19 '41			
Ap 24 '42			
O 26 '42			
Mr 5 - '43			

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01006 8288